HOMILETIC MONTHLY

JANUARY.

1. Feast of the Circumcision. (New Year.)
3. Dominica Vacans.
6. The Epiphany.
10. First Sunday after Epiphany.
17. Second Sunday after Epiphany. (Holy Name of Jesus).
24. Third Sunday after Epiphany.
31. Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.

NEW YEAR'S DAY.

Epist. Titus II, 11–15.
Gosp. Luke II, 21.

Subject.—*Settlement of the Christian's account for the New Year.*

Introduction.—We read in the single verse which comprises to-day's Gospel that the Holy Child received at its circumcision the name of Jesus which had been foretold by an Angel.

We, too, received at our baptism a name which pledged us to solemn relationship with this Holy Child and which predestined us by an indelible mark to the inheritance of the Christian name. Our forehead was annointed, our senses sanctified with the sacred chrism, we were regenerated into a new manhood at the Baptismal font and our name was entered upon the book in presence of priest and witnesses as a prophecy which would ever bear testimony to our Christian name and membership of the Holy Family, Jesus, Mary, Joseph. The pledge that bound us became at the same time the assurance of strength and protection if we would be faithful to the noble promise made for us by our godfather or godmother.

Transition.—Many of us have forgotten the pledge, which entitles us to the noblest inheritance of communion with Christ and membership with the Church, not only militant but also triumphant. The graces bestowed on us in the sacrament of Baptism have been neglected and we are now wedded to habits of wordliness, perhaps of sin, which have brought disorder into our lives, taken peace out of our hearts and prevent us from fulfilling with earnestness

the one duty which supersedes all others in importance, the duty of saving our souls.

This day marks the beginning of a new year. Business men examine the accounts of the past and arrange their affairs for the future. Let us do the same with reference to the great business of our salvation, lest the hour overtake us when the Master will come to demand the account and we shall then despair of being able to make satisfactory answer. If we are worldly we may learn from the wisdom of the world how to act presently.

First Point.—The embarrassed business man who wishes to straighten out his affairs will

a. Go carefully over his books and take note of his obligations ;

b. Acknowledge his debts, and pay them as far as he can and in just proportion to each creditor ;

c. Vouch for the remainder, not by speculations, but by placing business transactions on a solid basis of receipts and expenditures, so that by careful management he may satisfy justice and secure for himself and dependents an honorable credit and sufficiency.

Second Point.—The Catholic who feels that the affairs of his soul are embarrassed through neglects in the past and who wishes to straighten them out, will act similarly to the prudent business man whose experience has taught him that honesty is the only safe policy. He will therefore

a. Go over the pages of his past life. If we have made our Confessions hitherto regularly, we may also have found that they have not satisfied our own expectations nor the expectations of our friends by making us better men and women afterwards. This is strange. We were sincere as we went to relate our sins. We resolved to do better. We have made restitution of all illgotten goods and reparation for the injury done to our neighbor in his good name—and yet our business goes always wrong, our neighbors, the members of our family complain of us and we are not satisfied with ourselves. Why ?

b. We do not determine a sufficiently firm basis of action for the future. We deal in speculations and rest with our good resolutions. We trust to chance for avoiding certain temptations. We rely on good impulses, on feeling, on help from our confessor or zealous friends, on special graces, and these failing where we had no right to expect them, we

fall into old habits with their evil consequences. Our thoughtlessness allowing us to give way to our natural temper prevents the correction of our faults and we find no order and satisfaction in our lives. Thus we remain unjust to others and a burden to ourselves.

c. The proper way, therefore, to reconstruct our lives with reference to an orderly settlement of our eternal business interests is to inquire into our state of life; to see whether we fulfill the duties of that state as we would demand its fulfillment from others. Mark the peculiar temptations to wrong and the opportunities of good which your daily life contains. Is there anything in your occupation which hinders your observance of God's laws, the precepts of His holy Church, your devotions morning and night, the candid and manly profession of your faith? Are you a source of sin to others through your own negligence? On the other hand, do you make use of your position as parent, as employer, as friend and as fellow-worker to do that good to which every Christian is bound in charity? When you have found what you owe to God and your neighbor in your particular state of life, then settle at once by definite rule of action, what you will do to keep in the path of justice. Change at once whatever needs changing. Consult a wise friend if you are in doubt as to the best manner of acting in order to avoid habitual faults and sins arising out of your position. Settle the differences and enmities which arise out of jealousy or wounded pride. See whether you may not avoid one thing or do another to make your home more happy or your work more useful to your neighbor and yourself.

Conclusion.—In such wise let us then sum up our accounts, M. B., as a prudent business man would do. Take this day, this week to make a change. Mark it down and keep looking over or repeating it to yourselves day by day until the new way has become a habit. Thus will you fulfill the prophecy of your baptismal pledge and having satisfied all claims there will be in your hearts that Christian peace which is the mark of the children of God and an assurance of our salvation, to gain which is the one great business of our lives. Amen.

This sermon may be used for the Sunday following which has no special Gospel.

EPIPHANY.

Less. Isai. Lx, 1-6.
Gosp. Matt. II, 1-12.

Subject.—*True Catholic Devotion.*

Introduction.—To day the Church celebrates the adoration of the Child Jesus by the three Kings of the East. They follow the lead of interior grace calling them to Christ: "We have seen the star, and come to adore." Their action is to us a pattern of the worship which we owe to Christ. Let us examine their conduct and we shall learn from it a practical lesson for our own devotion.

First Point.—Having definitely recognized the voice of conscience in the outward manifestation of heavenly signs they

a. Brave the difficulties of a long and wearisome journey. They set aside every consideration of merely human prudence.

b. When the light of the star for a time disappears at their entrance of Jerusalem, they do not abandon their pious efforts to find the Christ Child, but seek knowledge through the ordinary channels of information.

c. They are prudent in their intercourse with Herod. The S. Text simply says of them that "having heard the King, they went their way." Finding later that the King is evilminded, they avoid him "and they went back another way into their own country."

Second Point.—Like the three Holy Kings we too are called to the worship of the Christ child. Each one has received and constantly receives some special light, some grace that should bring him nearer to God. And the answer to that silent invitation which comes to our hearts from time to time and which will bring us to Christ is

a. That we be willing, and generous enough to brave some difficulties in the way. The Christian's devotion is summed up in the cross, which means self-denial of one kind or another for the sake of Christ. "The Kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and only they who make use of violence can bear it away." To rise early or travel a long distance in order to adore the Saviour in His humble Tabernacle or at Mass and Benediction; to remain fasting that we may receive Him in the poor manger of our hearts; to bend our heads in contrite sorrow and confess our hidden sins so as to cleanse ourselves for His meeting—these are hardships known to every faithful Catholic. But they are

not greater than those which the holy Kings from the East must have endured. They were wise men, skilled, not only in the knowledge of human things, but in heavenly wisdom as well, and we may safely follow them in their humble, docile devotion though it be in the poor stable such as that of Bethlehem. They were not offended by the wretchedness of the place, for they saw only what they had come to find, the Christ child, the Saviour hidden under the guise of a weak little child, with His poor mother and friendless holy Foster father standing by in heart-broken, yet grateful adoration.

b. But our devotion must not wholly depend on the moving of grace, on sensible light, on material helps. Some of us go to the sacraments when the confessor deals with them kindly, or when everybody else goes; they hear mass when there is a convenient companion, or a missionary is announced to preach a fine sermon, which they want to hear so as to be moved to good. Such aids are not to be despised, but they are not to be depended on. We must find ways to fulfill our duty even when the first impulse, or the accidental help which leads us, disappears. If our worship of God is animated by that confidence which follows faith we shall not waver in our fidelity to Him even if trials and darkness for a time seem to obscure the heavens.

Nor may we on the other hand abandon ourselves in foolish trust to the guidance of God and neglect the ordinary means which are put at our disposal. There are sick persons who will not consult a physician, but expect a miracle from God to cure them. So there are persons in tribulation who, instead of helping themselves out of them by their personal efforts, get prayers and novenas and masses said that they might obtain peace or help without having to do anything which might hurt their sensitiveness or interfere with their love of ease. The wise men of the East could not have been men who delighted in the gay distractions of crowded Jerusalem or the licentious court of Herod. But this did not prevent them from entering the city and the palace of the Jewish King. Yet whilst they kept in touch with the world, for the sake of satisfying their desire to find the Saviour, they teach us

c. To be cautious in our dealings with the world. If in the fulfillment of your Christian duties you have need of consulting those who have no sympathy with your religious motives, be brief, and having learned what is of value to you in the matter of Christian duty go about your business. If you find those who have apparently aided you in a good deed, to be evil minded, quietly avoid them. "Go" like the Magi "by another way." God will stand to you and the star will reappear when it is necessary. But mark, that if the Magi avoided evil company, they kept good companionship among themselves. They were three. Their bond of union in the good cause, in their ardent search for Christ remains unbroken to the end. None of them, although each a King, are enticed to remain with Herod, but the three are found at the foot of the manger. So with us where there are two or three united in Christ's holy name, He Himself is in the midst of them.

Conclusion.—Thus fulfilling our religious duties with generosity and with a ready spirit of sacrifice will bring to us the peace and joy, which nothing else can give us on earth; for the Kings on seeing the star again "rejoiced with exceeding great joy." Unfailing confidence will animate us and bring with it that holy prudence, that natural reserve, which defeats evil by its very simplicity. Avoiding the wrong ways of worldlings and keeping close in the wake of Christian association, we shall be sure to find our happiness in the company of Christ. Mary and Joseph will admit us to their holy family circle, near to our divine Lord in whose joyful Home we shall spend eternity.—"Jesus, Mary and Joseph to you we commend our souls and our bodies!" Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

Epist. Rom. XII, 1-5.
Gosp. Luke II, 42-52.

Subject—*Christian Obedience.*

Introduction.—In the Jewish lawbook (Talmud), we read regarding the sons of a Hebrew. "*After the completion of the twelfth year a boy is to be considered a youth and is to keep the fast on the Day of Atonement. Till he is thirteen his religious duties are to be performed for him by his father, but on his thirteenth birthday the parent*

is no longer answerable for his son's sins." According to this precept of the Jewish Church our Divine Lord was no longer a child, but bound from the entrance into his thirteenth year to fulfill his religious obligations like every adult of His race. Among these obligations was that of visiting and offering sacrifice in the great temple at Jerusalem on the three principal feasts of the year. For the rest, every town had its synagogue where the devout Israelite might worship on the other sabbaths and festival days.

Transition.—The Gospel describes the scene in which the youthful Saviour performs His duty on the great feast of the Pasch for the first time, and in the act three phases of Christian obedience are strongly marked for our instruction. It is *prompt.* It is *carried out with intelligence* and liberty of spirit. It is characterized by *humility and charity.*

First Point.—

a. Promptly on reaching the age of maturity the Child Jesus sets out with Mary and Joseph to undertake the long and solemn journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem. The beautiful city where the Holy family lived lies high among the mountains, nearly twelve hundred feet above the sea, and can only be reached from the plain by a tedious climb. Descending they wandered southward for many days across the vale of Esdraelon until they came within sight of the Holy City, crossing the deep valleys that leads to the Damascus gate. They prayed on the way and took scanty food, as was the custom with the devout Hebrews in preparing for the great feast. Was the law then so rigorous as not to allow of any dispensation? Assuredly not. Mary might have remained in their modest home at Nazareth and Jesus, her child, to have a care of the mother, whilst Joseph could satisfy the requirements of the law. There was a synagogue at Nazareth where Jesus might go and join in spirit with the two million of devout Hebrews who came from every town and village of Judea and Samaria to offer thanksgiving and atonement to Jehova the God of their Fathers. But no; He seeks no exemption and between Mary His holy mother and the aged St. Joseph, we meet Him joyously hastening to the feast.

c. Having fulfilled the law, when the days of the feast were over, He is found in the Temple School attached to the

great synagogue. Here every Hebrew of intelligence had access for the purpose of obtaining a more perfect knowledge of the law, since books from which such knowledge might be gained were rare in those days. We are told that the youthful Saviour listened to the teaching of the priests, but also that He asked them questions.

It may seem for the moment as though this act, on the part of our Lord, of seeking knowledge in the law, was accomplished by the breach of another law, that of obedience to His parents. But this is not the case. We have seen that our Lord had reached the age of His majority, when He became responsible for His own actions before the law. He made use, therefore, of a right which every Rabbi taught as a duty. If the affectionate recollection of the child's docility at home had made Mary and Joseph forget this claim for the time, it gave our Divine Lord an opportunity of emphasizing that the filial duty of remaining with His family would henceforth or might at any time be superseded by the manly duty of following His higher vocation; just as in later years His wisdom accepted death at a time when His widowed mother would seem to have most needed His remaining with her.

The fact that Mary and Joseph had not been forewarned of this act was but natural, owing to the circumstances of the case, which our Lord might have obviated by using His prophetic foresight, but not otherwise. In the offering of the Paschal sacrifices the men were separated from the women. In so vast a crowd gathering for the most part in the proximity of the Temple, the members of the different families were easily lost sight of, but they would meet on the journey homeward. Thus Mary may have thought the Child Jesus to be with St. Joseph, whilst he believed that the fond Son would guard the steps of His immaculate mother. Christ once occupied with the priestly teachers might justly be prevailed on as a matter of religious duty, to which as a free son of Judah He was now bound, to remain. Did not Mary and Joseph know the law? "Did you not know" He asks on meeting Mary's tender reproach, "that I must be about my Father's business?" As if to say: You have forgotten that I am no longer the child of our home but the dutiful citizen of the Eternal Father's Kingdom.

But He removes every vestige of doubt as if this assertion of the obedience He owes to His heavenly Father and to the authorities of the Temple could lessen His loyal love and dutiful submission toward His earthly parents.

c. He goes down with them and comes to Nazareth and is subject to them. Thus He establishes by His example the duty of humble and lovely fidelity to the domestic relations, even of those who are their own masters. For nearly eighteen years before we meet Him again at Jerusalem, He dwells in the retired home of Nazareth "gradually ripening into manhood—as son, brother, citizen, neighbor, friend—like others."

Second Point.—If we are to be imitators of Christ in order to become co-heirs and sons with Him in the Heavenly Jerusalem, our duty as Christians, that is to say, in the fulfillment of our religious obligations is plain.

a. A cheerful readiness to observe scrupulously the precepts of our holy Curch is a mark of healthy Christianity. Human nature inclines us to take every pretext for an excuse to dispense ourselves from these obligations. We exaggerate the difficulties which prevent our punctual attendance at mass, (observance of fasts—abstinence, reception of the sacraments, support of the church, etc.).

b. But the duty of obedience to the ordinances of the Church as the mouth-piece of God is not fulfilled by a blind and external compliance. God has given us intelligence that we might understand the purpose and meaning of His laws. This we attain by attending to instructions of lawfully appointed teachers and also by informing ourselves through diligent inquiry concerning the truths of our holy religion. (Reading good books etc.) We are no less bound to inform our obedience by good reasons, than to show these reasons also to others who may be in search of truth or who would be attracted and edified by our knowledge so as to be led to the admiration and then to the embracing of Catholic truth. "And all that heard Him," says the Gospel "were astonished at His wisdom and His answers." And in this search we are to be guided wholly by our duty and not by human respect or personal affection.

c. Finally we are to apply the lessons taught us and intelligently understood by us, as far as opportunity allows, in

our home relations. By unwearied respect for our parents, even though their faults and defects from which superior education has shielded us, may grate on our feelings, shall we gather untold graces. The one precept of the decalogue to which not only a heavenly promise is attached, but the blessings of earth and a long life, is the one "Honor thy father and thy mother." From this duty no accomplishment of mind or body, no position in life can exempt us.

Examples.—When Bethsabee the mother of the wisest of Kings, Salomon, came to him to ask a favor for Adonias "the King arose to meet her and bowed to her * * * * and a throne was set for the King's mother * * * * and the King said to her: My mother, ask, for I must not turn away thy face." III Kings, c. II, 19, 20.

It is related in the life of Thomas More, the saintly martyr of England, that even as a married man and in high dignity at court, he reverently knelt before his aged father to ask his blessing upon himself, each time when he paid him a visit, and that he treated him with all the affection of a dutiful child.

Conclusion.—Fidelity to the law of God is proved by a prompt attendance at the devotions, and in the fulfillment of the precepts of the holy Church. Not only in body, however, and externally are we to fulfill this duty, but with our minds and hearts as well. How far we do this will be shown in our conduct at home and our intercourse with our friends and strangers. They who are truly filled with the sense of Christian obedience to God and the Church cannot but exemplify it in daily life by growing continually in wisdom as in age and grace with God and men. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

Epist. Rom. XII, 6–16.
Gosp. John II, 1–11.

Subject.—*The Prayer of Mary.*

Introduction.—Friends or relatives of the Holy Family at a village called Cana (the reedy place) living a few miles north of Nazareth, had announced a marriage feast and invited the saintly Mother and her Son. Thus far there had been nothing to attract public attention to the wonderful prophet, the Carpenter's Son who lived in modest retirement with His parents. And now that He is to manifest Himself for the first time as endowed with a divine power

and mission, He choses the bright scene of domestic rejoicing for the working of a miracle which, as the Evangelist te'ls us, causes His disciples to believe in Him. There is wine at the feast, the symbol of gladness and festivity and which is in the Eastern countries not so much a temptation to excess as it is with us, because of the climate and the temperate habits of the common people. Its entire absence would have been regarded as a want of hospitality in a household where excess could not have been thought of. A larger host of friends must have gathered on this occasion than had been anticipated, perhaps because it became known that the beautiful mother and her son were to be there. Whilst a certain number of guests were invited, it would have been a breach of the Levitic law to turn away any one, friend or stranger, who came to offer congratulations on this occasion. Mary, with her silent kindly watchfulness perceives the humiliation of the host when the steward calls him aside to say: "we have no more wine." Quickly she approaches her divine Son and whispers to Him, these simple words: "They have no wine." Was it in the tone of her subdued voice that the prayer lay? It must have been, for it was answered so quickly, so generously. Let us study this prayer of our dear mother, who understood God so much better than we can ever hope to do. Both its motive and its manner will teach us to ask aright and to receive answer to our requests.

First Point.—Mary's *motive* is human *compassion.* It was not a case of dire necessity or bodily suffering or bereavement, such as in later days called for her divine Son's miraculous mercy. Her delicate tenderness wishes to spare the host humiliation and to prevent the interruption of modest rejoicings at a festival which our Lord had sanctioned by His presence. He had come to show that human life in all its phases may be raised to a religious dignity. She knew that His sympathies were with the common needs of man as with his greatest, and her gentle womanly feeling interprets His probable mode of action. But mark; though she asks for the relief from a temporal inconvenience, which a religious mind could easily have borne, she does not ask for herself. *Unselfishness* is the characteristic of her compassion and unselfish prayer opens the Heart of our Lord, even though it be for the commonest things of earth. How does Mary bring forth her desire? In simplicity and with absolute confidence.

Second Point.—

a. Never was prayer more *simple.* The Phoenician woman

who asked for the cure of her daughter said : "Lord help me!" and she reasoned with our divine Master when she did not at once obtain her answer. So did the centurion and the lepers and the blind men of whom we read in scripture. They gave a reason for their petition and they called on His mercy as the "Son of David," the true Messiah. Mary does not even put her request in form of a petition. "They have no wine" she says ; but how much of her immaculate and loving heart must have been in the sound of these words. She exemplified in advance the lesson which her divine Son gave in later days to His Disciples when He told them not to pray as the heathens do, with many words, because His Father and theirs in Heaven knew all their needs.

b. But if the prayer of the mother of Christ is remarkable for its simplicity it presents also an instance of *singular confidence*. For a moment we would interpret the answer of our Lord as a reproach. "Woman what is it to me and to thee?" Could there have been any harshness in these words? We cannot convince ourselves that the meek and gentle Redeemer of sinful man could have said anything to wound the delicate tenderness of His dearest mother. And her very action shows that, whatever the words may convey to us in this translated form, they must have been spoken in a way that assured her that He would come to the relief of the host, His friend, for forthwith we see her go to the waiters and say : "Whatever He shall say to you, do ye." Sweetest mother ! Thou didst know and interpret aright thy dear Son's compassionate Heart and He answers—answers so fully and so graciously, that they have not only wine filling the casks to the brim, but sweetest wine, such as they had not tasted at this or any feast before. And notice another phase which accompanies this simple and confident prayer of Mary.

Third Point —She instructs the waiters to fulfill exactly His divine commands. Thus the true charity of intercessory prayer is ever accompanied by that practical wisdom which admonishes those who expect help from God by extraordinary means, that they faithfully fulfill His precepts. God's miracles are wrought not simply to make man comfortable but for a higher purpose, that is, to aid him in the obtaining of his salvation. To expect God's aid for the gratifi-

cation of our whims or to be relieved from evils which our own sins and neglects have brought on us, without its bringing a cure from sin and an improvement of life, is presumption and blasphemy.

Fourth Point.—(Application). It is plain that we may pray for temporal blessings. But our prayer must not be prompted by purely selfish interests. It should be simple and from the heart. Then, whatever the signs may be outwardly, as though our wishes were not heard by God, let us confidently expect the help we seek. It will surely come. If the mother could ask her son, and receive her request, will not the children, asking with sincerity, obtain answer? And will not the mother herself present our needs if we invite her into our home-circle, making her a participant of our joys as well as of our needs? Yet whilst we pray, let true charity be the accompaniment of our devotion and trust. See that the will of God be accomplished by those with whom you have gained influence, because God has answered your prayer in behalf of their temporal necessities; for the end of all our efforts must be to lead the soul permanently to its happiness in heaven. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

Epist. Rom. XII, 16-21.
Gosp. Matt. VIII, 1-13.

Subject.—*The faith and the risk of Catholics.*

Introduction.—Two miracles are wrought by our Lord. Both are the effects of faith; one on a man who had listened to the sermon on the mount; the other in answer to the petition of a pagan officer in behalf of his servant who was lying sick in Capharnaum. Whilst the centurion is still speaking, our Lord turns to the crowd which had followed Him, exclaiming: "Amen, I say to you, I have not found such great faith in Israel—many shall come from the East and the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac amd Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven, but the Children of the Kingdom shall be cast into exterior darkness."

Transition.—In these words our Lord conveys the lesson that, whilst belief in Him is a pledge of salvation, nevertheless it does not follow that all those who profess to believe in Him will possess the Kingdom of Heaven. To call ourselves children of Christ or of His Church is not sufficient to secure our salvation—nay that *many*

of those who bear this name will be cast out into exterior darkness, whilst others, seemingly outside of the Catholic Church, will obtain the mercy of God because in their hearts they were truly Catholics and with the graces accorded them they sought and found the truth in the end.

What was it then in particular which caused our Lord's admirable comment upon the faith of the centurion who had not as yet professed the name of a true believer in the divine revelation of the Jewish law?

First Point.—That which called forth the approving words of our Divine Lord in this case was the *humility* of the centurion's faith. "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter my house." He was a Roman, a noble officer of the imperial army; yet he pleads that he is not worthy to receive the son of the Jewish carpenter into his lordly home. Yet this humility is not an abject weakness. He understands his own position as a captain of rank and authority, and so he explains how he exacts obedience from those under him, and receives it. But whilst he demonstrates the kindness with which he looks upon his subjects, in the very fact that he seeks help for his servant, he recognizes that the representative and prophet of God has a superior claim to that of those who rule in the State or army. Humility is truth. A proper recognition of his own position, both as superior to those with whose conduct he is charged, and as inferior to the spiritual rulers, are the mark of a just and right faith.

To this exceptional humility the centurion joins, as has been intimated, a charitable solicitude of those with whose care he is intrusted. Thus living faith ever consists in a union of a well ordered subjection and practical charity.

Second Point.—And what is it that will bring us, though we are children of God's household, to eternal ruin? The answer is plain: A life which in spite of our profession of faith demonstrates that we are actuated by motives contrary to those which strike us in the centurion, namely, pride and want of charity towards those whom providence has placed in a position below us or dependent on us.

We believe that to possess the Catholic faith gives us an advantage over our neighbor who has been less fortunate in securing that grace from his birth. So it does. And yet, is it not true that if we have a higher standard of morality and more abundant grace, we must show both in our conduct? Can men point to us and say: Behold these Christians, how devout, how sober, how honest, how

charitable to each other. If, like the centurion, we have a proper estimate of our responsibility, we shall tremble in the presence of our Lord and say with deepfelt and abiding sorrow: Lord I am not worthy to have received the grace of Thy presence, the adoption into the household of Thy holy Church, the abundant blessings of the sacraments.

Moreover our faith rests essentially upon charity. Love is its one and lasting test. Kindness to our neighbor, a willingness to help others, especially inferiors, is the mark of a Christian soul.

Conclusion.—Apply the touchstone of humility and charity to your faith and see if it be such as to exempt you from the danger of being counted among the children of the household, who in spite of their faith—a faith without life—will be cast out into the exterior darkness of hell, where there shall be pride and envy and every vice reaping its awful fruits amid weeping and gnashing of teeth. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

Epist. Rom. XIII, 8-18.
Gosp. Matt. VIII, 23-27.

Subject.—*The True Standard of Safety.*

Introduction.—Men commonly measure the worth of hidden motives by external appearances. Yet outward show is not a proof of inward strength, nor is unostentatious silence the mark of inactivity or weakness.

In to day's Gospel we see our Lord rest in apparently careless slumber whilst the noisy winds and waters drown the timid complaints of the sailors Yet the roar of the storm and the tossing of the sea are controlled by the almighty hand of Him who seems to sleep. Is He careless of His creatures, of the safety of His children? No. In their anxiety to be safe His disciples have forgotten that God cannot be judged by the rules of men, that He can never be indifferent to their needs, that He can never sleep, though He be silent.

Transition.—In forming our judgments concerning God's relation to us, we are much like the disciples. We are fidgety and anxious and worry ourselves with many needless cares and fears which He can and will avert if we but trust Him. We, like them, deserve the reproach: O, ye of little faith, why are ye fearful? Let us enter into the true cause of our fears that we might set them aside.

First Point.—Our want of confidence in God's assistance arises from a false conception of true strength and greatness. We esteem wealth—though the security it offers may fail at any moment. We bow to a great name, though it may easily be tarnished by disgrace or calumny. And from esteeming these things in others, we come to seek them for ourselves and place our trust in them.

But real strength, true greatness is not in these external things. It lies within the soul. The slumbering germ beneath the ground gradually develops from within and finally stands firmrooted to defy the storm and amid the changing seasons ever renews its strength with offers of fresh fruit and grateful shade.

Seeking quick results, measuring greatness and safety by the impression it makes on our senses, we load ourselves with burdens and from vain hopes reap only disappointment. We are constantly terrified by some threatened loss. Yet if we are with God, what need is there of fear though He seem to slumber?

Second Point.—But we are what we are. If our want of trust has become a habit, or if we are not sufficiently strong in faith to see God in all things, we need not for that reason despair. God has compassion on our weakness and whilst He chides us because of our little faith, He will nevertheless arise and calm the sea if in our timid anxiety we ask it of Him. Only let us keep beside Him, in the same vessel with Him.

Third Point.—What is true of the individual, is true of the Church at large. We see the bark of St. Peter constantly tossed about amid the violent seas of human strife and malice. Need we despair and think that God will abandon her to the fury of the waves? No. He is there. He slumbers only and she cannot perish. Men of little faith predict all sorts of evil. Whatever it may be the Church will come forth safe and victorious.

Conclusion.—Follow Christ into the boat, as did the disciples. Remain with Him and trust Him though He seem to slumber. But if fear overtake you then pray and He will hear you, for although confidence is the best worship of God our weakness will find relief in urgent devotion and God will arise and sooth the storms within our anxious hearts. Amen.

HOMILETIC MONTHLY

FEBRUARY.

7. Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.
14. Septuagesima Sunday.
21. Sexagesima Sunday.
28. Quinquagesima Sunday.
Parents Educate your Children!
Points for Preacher and Catechist.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

Epist. Col. III, 12-17.
Gosp. Matt. XIII, 24-30.

Prelude.—On the Parables.

On an autumn day in the second year of our Lord's public ministry, we find Him preaching at Capharnaum. As the constantly growing crowd presses closer and closer around Him, He turns towards the lake Genezareth whither the people follow Him. Having reached the water's edge He steps into a boat and bids the rowers move out some distance whence the multitude, seated on both sides of an inlet, could easily see and hear Him, for, as travellers inform us, in the clear lake-air of Genezareth every word is heard distinctly at a distance of three hundred yards. (Cf. Maas, Life of Christ, LXIII, p. 162.) It was here that our Lord began the series of parables which are read on three successive Sundays in the Gospels of the Mass. They are stories of truth which appealed to the simple intelligence of His followers, laborers of the field or humble fishermen and which forever retain their value for the Christian as illustrations of moral truth.

Subject.—*The Tares in the Church of God.*

Introduction.—The parable of to-day shows us how evil is suffered to grow side by side with the good in the field of God. Men are often surprised to see scandal and sin in the Church where the

seed of truth has been sown by the hand of Christ. Yet it need not astonish although it should warn us. Let us briefly enter into the cause of this fact and learn a lesson both of wisdom and of forbearance from the action of the Master of the field.

First Point.—God sows the good seed of His doctrine in the field of the Catholic Church. She teaches nothing but virtue and holiness.

a. Her *precepts* have this one purpose, of exercising a gentle and determined violence upon the wayward tendency of human nature toward sin. As the master of the field must needs be obeyed in his orders so as to avoid confusion and loss, so she exacts from the children of her household compliance with her laws and precepts for the preservation of order and the common good.

b. By her *sacraments* she imparts divine grace which is to strengthen the laborers in her field.

c. Her manifold *devotions* tend to animate the weary spirits and infuse fresh courage by the union of prayer and thanksgiving.

Second Point.—Whilst *the men sleep*, the demon, who never sleeps, plants the seeds of corruption and strife, which feed on the strength of the good grain.

a. The entrance of the enemy is often due to the want of vigilance on the part of the laborers in the master's field. They sleep at noon ; and thus the demon may plant his weeds wherever he finds the grain most prosperous.

b. The weeds here spoken of are supposed to be a poisonous growth called "Zowan." It resembles wheat so closely that you can hardly distinguish one from the other. It is said that, in the Eastern countries, even at this day, an enemy will commonly revenge himself on his neighbor by scattering this poisonous seed among the wheat at night or during the noon hours when the laborers, owing to the excessive heat, are asleep. The roots of this plant entwine with the roots of the wheat and so tenacious is this cockle of the soil, that it takes years to undo its effects completely. It can, however, be distinguished by its fruits at harvest-time, and hence it is left to grow until then.

Third Point.—Like to this weed are the effects of lax morals and evil doctrine in the Catholic Church. The enemy, in the form of proud and self-conceited men, scatters the poisonous seed of doubtful and liberal doctrine, both in regard to morals and to faith which so resembles truth, that many good and unsuspicious men in the Church are deceived thereby. As the weeds entwine their roots with those of the pure grain, it is often impossible to pull them up without endangering the growth of the true wheat. Hence follows the necessity on our part of

a. Being *vigilant*, lest the enemy enter into our midst, scattering his noxious seed, or allowing it to take hold of our roots. This we can do by firmly adhering to the ancient teaching of the Church as they have been delivered to us, and regarding with suspicion every innovation in Catholic doctrine, even though it come to us with specious reasons and under the guise of progress.

b. Whilst we must be cautious in accepting every opinion, although endorsed by so-called Catholic organs, if it be not in full harmony with the teachings of our ancient Church and her appointed head the sovereign Pontiff, we must also be prudent in not letting *immoderate zeal* carry us away by striving to root out at once, what we see to be dangerous. God watches and He will judge at harvest time.

Conclusion.—Each of us being a laborer in the field of God and interested in keeping it free from error and scandal, should co-operate, lest Catholic doctrine be distorted to suit the mind of the enemies of our holy faith. This can be most effectually done by living carefully according to the precepts we have received from her, by making use of the sacramental graces she offers as the channel of God's mercies and by uniting in prayer for the preservation of the ancient faith and the godliness and virtue of Catholics in every land, but especially in this country, where freedom fosters the blessed activity of the Church, but also allows to her enemies full play of scattering their insidious germs of false doctrine and loose morals. Amen.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Epist. I Cor. IX, 24—X, 5.
Gosp. Matt. XX, 1-16.

Subject.—*The Race of Life.*

Introduction.—The object of our creation is "to know, serve and love God; and thus to save our souls." But if we have to save our soul, that soul must somehow be in peril. So it is indeed. We are like men who, to use the words of St. Paul in to-day's Epistle, run in a race. The time is measured, and if at a fixed hour—the hour of death—we have not arrived at that state of knowledge and love of God which will insure us pardon of sin, we shall have forfeited our victory and be doomed to spend an eternal life in the pains of hellish remorse for having misspent or idled away time that would have secured us an unending happiness in heaven.

First Point.—Life is a race. As a matter of fact every man is in it. Every one runs. Look about you and see the eager scramble of competitors for wealth, for earthly honors, for pleasures, for every kind and degree of vanities. Envy, jealousy and greed, each with its train of detraction, calumny, deception and cruelty drive without ceasing the crowds of men who have their gaze fixed on the things of earth. All run indeed. Of many a one of whom the world foretells success because it mistakes the hectic flush of feverish anxiety for the marks of lasting health and strength, it records failure in the end. And why? Because these men ran at an uncertainty; they spent themselves in vain; their efforts were but like the empty beatings of the air. A phantom of beauty, or of greatness, or of possession lured them on—they hastened without further thought and found the image vanish from their grasp at the hour of death. Have you ever watched a death-bed and seen how the poor mortal frame exerts itself at the last minute; how even when life is nearly gone, the thin white hands lay hold of the bed clothes as if to hold them fast, or find in the frail things of earth some stay against the power of death. It is a reminder, M. B., that we should fix our aim beyond the earth, looking higher, to the strong goal of eternal life.

Second Point.—"I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty; I so fight, not as one beating the air." We know that St. Paul gained the victory, that to-day and forever more he enjoys the blessed beatitude of heaven. How did he run? He was a man like ourselves; subject to the same weakness, capable of no greater

resolves or efforts than are within the reach of each of us according to the appointed duties of our lives. St. Paul obtained his crown by acting in the same way in which men act, even at this day, who engage in a race. How do these do?

a. *They fix their aim.* They measure the distance, and they gauge their powers, and see what is required of them in order to be ready for the contest. That which prevents many of us from leading a truly Christian life whose habits would make the race comparatively easy to us, is the fact that *we do not give it sufficient thought.* We do not place the aim of life before us in the one light which would make us realize the importance of the issue. We calculate our earthly interests with care. We foresee the needs and the results of our domestic or business activity. We omit to measure the one and all important journey which, if missed by one single step, at the end means ruin to all our projects in time and in eternity.

b. Men who are bound to win in a race *train for it.* "I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection," says the Apostle. So, too, the racers carry a whip and stimulate their yielding muscles into ever fresh activity. They abstain from food and drink. They practice daily without intermission.

Such must be our course. "Every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things—they indeed that they might receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one."

c. Nor does he who prepares himself for the race deem it sufficient to practice and bring his body into subjection by abstinence, but often employs a trainer, who will watch and manage him lest following his inclinations he violate the rule which is to secure him endurance and that promptness of action which wins the race. He subjects himself to another's law; he lays aside all things which may encumber him in the strife for the mastery of his appointed task.

Is it not in this way that the prudent Christian acts who places himself in the hands of a spiritual guide, that he may not fail through inordinate self-love in the choice of the best means whereby to gain his end, eternal life?

Conclusion.—What folly then to neglect the one great affair in life on the right execution of which depends our whole future.

Look to it M. B., and when you have determined that the pursuits of earth can be only means to a greater end, then redouble your efforts to regain what you have lost in days gone by amid the frivolities of the world. Strive for the mastery. Even though it be the eleventh hour, the mercies of God are still at our disposal, and a serious good will may help us to redouble our steps henceforth so as to win the crown of eternal life. Amen.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Epist. II Cor. XI, 19—XII, 9.
Gosp. Luke VIII, 4-15.

Subject.—*The Roots of Charity.*

Introduction.—Two weeks ago we read the parable of the cockle among the wheat, and representing the evil which for a time flourishes aside of the good in this world as in the Church, but at the end will be separated and destroyed. To-day we have another parable drawn from the sowing of seed in the field of the Church. Our Lord points out how the good grain of truth may suffer, not only from the enemy scattering poisonous seeds in its midst, but from the fact that the wheat of God's teaching itself does not always take hold on our hearts. Men are not always and equally well prepared to receive the seed of truth. Some falls by the wayside where the winds of temptation soon scatter it. Others have their hearts full of worldliness and dangerous pleasures, which bring their thorns of dejection and remorse, whilst they give no opportunity for serious thought, but choke and stifle each admonition in the very germ. In a third kind of hearts the good seed of truth finds indeed an open surface. The bright sun shines upon it, and the dew of heaven moistens it, but alas, these hearts are devoid of charity; they are hard as the rock which will not allow the germs of God's word to take root within them.

Transition.—Charity is the root of faith. It gives life and fructifies religion, for without charity faith is dead and barren. If we examine the root which holds the useful plant to the earth and secures it fair blossoms and healthy fruit, we shall find it a perfect

image of the virtue of charity, which, laying hold of the open soil of the heart, will produce the sweet and health-giving fruits brought forth in a perfect Christian life.

The typical characteristics of the plant-root are three. It *grows downward* into the soil. It *absorbs nutriment* for the upward growth. It *fixes the plant.*

First Point.—

a. The root of a plant ordinarily grows downward into the lower soil. It is hidden to the eye. Its activity is silent. It has little or no outward beauty.

b. But despite its lowliness and absence of gloss it is extremely useful; for it sends its little fibrous arms in every direction, quietly absorbing the moisture of the ground and leading it up through the channels of the stem into the different branches, where it is converted into the nutritious juice of the luscious fruit.

c. Not only do the tendrils of the root which silently grow larger and larger beneath the ground, indicating a similar growth above, feed the plant with rich sap, but they also hold it firmly in its place. They are like the stakes to which the tent-ropes are fastened. The winds may blow, but they cannot overturn it. Nay, the more the storm bend stem or trunk or branches, the more firmly do the roots grasp the earth below.

Second Point.—Compare charity, as the foundation of a good Christian life, with the roots of a plant and we shall find it to possess similar qualities.

a. True charity rests in humility as its groundwork. Its activity is mostly silent and hidden. It cares little for appearances or human praise. Its benefits are bestowed by the right hand without the left being aware of it.

b. But though the growth of true Christian charity is commonly silent, appearing to those only who look below the surface, yet it is never inactive. It is constantly spending its energies and gathering fresh nourishment for the soul by sending forth its rude branches, large and small, on every side. Great deeds which last in their effects are commonly the work of silent, unselfish and persevering activity.

c. A further quality of a good, strong root is this, that it becomes the basis of firmness and steadiness in the trunk above. Thus charity, when it is of the right quality, has the effect of steadying the character of the whole man. There is a consistency, a strength of purpose not moved by outward things which distinguishes the true Christian from the worldly man or woman who live according to their inclination. Such persons are not easily cast down by trouble; but they become more firmly attached to their religion, that is to say, to God, in proportion as they are tried. Like the well-rooted oak they cannot be shaken from their confirmed position.

Third Point.—Before we conclude, let me, as a matter of warning, call your attention to another kind of root which violates the characteristics just pointed out to you.

a. There is what botanists call a parasite or *false* root. It has its origin in some unhealthy germ which feeds on the true root. Like the poisonous ivy which you sometimes notice twining itself around the stem and branches of a tree, causing it gradually to wither, so this false root winds itself around the branches of the true root, penetrating its tissues and withdrawing the nutritious sap from the mother plant. These false roots sometimes sprout a fair, bright blossom and a little fruit full of poison.

b. Quite in the same way there exists a parasite of virtue, a false charity, which whilst it destroys the good with which it comes in contact, sometimes bears a fair and bright blossom and even fruit. This is the charity which seeks to display itself, which claims the good it has never done, which through envy and malice seeks to destroy another's good, to put its own selfish work in the place of a neighbor's unpretentious charity. There are persons who will not let a good deed gain ground unless they have a hand in it, or who will prevent others doing what it is out of their own power to do, pretending that they are actuated by motives of charity which prompt them to forestall failure.

Conclusion.—What we must guard against, therefore, is hardness of heart, or that indifference and callousness which is like the rock, not permitting the good grain which our heavenly master

sows to take root in us. If, like the true root, we seek the lowly sphere, humbling ourselves, extending our usefulness as far as may be to all around us, we shall not fail to become firmly grounded in our faith, consistent in our daily lives, and sure to bear every good fruit of virtue, which in turn will become the germs of other good lives when we ourselves shall have been transplanted into the heavenly paradise forever in the keeping of our heavenly Gardener, and a joy to angels and saints. Amen.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Epist. I Cor. XIII, 1-13.
Gosp. Luke XVIII, 31-43.

Subject.—*The willingness to see.*

Introduction.—Our divine Lord predicts, as we have just seen, the sufferings which await Him at Jerusalem. These things had been foretold about the Messiah by the Jewish prophets, and the apostles knew that Christ was the Messiah. They had been daily witnesses of His life of self-denial for upward of three years. Nevertheless the Evangelist tells us that they "understood none of these things." Strange blindness in men so good and so near to Christ. Naturally we ask ourselves how could this be and are we too perhaps, although near to our Lord and daily witnesses, as Christians, of His practical teaching, blinded in a way which may prevent us from realizing the things which await us and the graces which lead us to Jerusalem.

But an incident, immediately afterwards occurs which seems to contain a practical lesson as to how such blindness might be removed. Let us study the two leading facts of to-day's gospel in their mutual relation and see what they mean for us.

First Point.—*Man's incapacity to understand supernatural truth, ordinarily arises out of a reluctance to accept what is painful to human nature.* Many sincere persons would at once become Catholics if they did not shrink from the difficulty of complying with the precepts of the Church, such as confession, fasts, hearing mass, and the like. Others are kept through human respect or friendship or

eagerness to retain position and social advantages. In this state of mind, they do not allow themselves to reflect seriously; they fight shy of hard truth and console themselves with the thought that God cannot mean to be hard to them and that they do not fully understand the obligation of setting aside all else for the gain of their souls.

But this reluctance to face hard truth and the consequent want of clear light in matters of faith is not the exclusive quality of those outside of the Church. It affects all the world and Catholics as well. Our Lord once said to His disciples: The world wants to be deceived. Every one of us may have observed this tendency. Praise a man for virtues which he is perfectly conscious of not possessing and he will be your friend, though you deceive him. Tell a man his faults and in most cases you will make him an enemy. We dread to hear what hurts our vanity or self-love. We dislike the prophets of evil though their predictions have all the sanction of probability. And this is the case with even the good.—"The world wants to be deceived."

Nevertheless it is extremely important that we should not allow ourselves to be deceived. What possible profit can it be to us to have deferred the knowledge of ourselves until the last moment when it will be impossible for us to correct the errors committed under a mistaken view of facts. This is especially true with regard to obligations which, though hard to flesh and blood are essentially bound up with our salvation. Like our Lord with the Apostles we are on our way to Jerusalem. That way is a way of the Cross. No man who accounts his soul of value and would save it, can afford to shirk this journey, this royal road of the Cross. Yet to know it and to recognize it and to know that we are in the company of our Lord is a wonderful help toward accomplishing that journey which ends at Jerusalem, the City of peace, and in the resurrection of Christ and His brethren, the co-heirs of the heavenly City. How shall we gain this knowledge, this courage to face the burden of the cross to obtain the glory of the crown? By imitating the poor blind man on the road near Jericho.

Second Point.—A beggar by the wayside hears the surging crowds pass by and asks someone near him what it all means. He learns that Christ is coming—the great prophet—He who is going to Jerusalem. And the blind beggar asks to receive the light of his eyes and then follows the Saviour—whither? To Jerusalem, the city

of Christ's martyrdom, where He is to be reviled and scourged and crucified.

That which will secure us light is the willingness to see. This willingness will show itself in three ways. We try to learn from those around us about the things which are of profit to us in leading us to Christ or bringing His graces within our reach. We must not be afraid of self-knowledge or of the truth even when it means something disagreeable to our feelings. When the poor blind man cried out for Our Lord to come over to him, the people told him to be silent, but he only cried the more. Why? Because he wanted light. In the same way nothing should prevent us from seeking to obtain light ; first *by inquiry* and secondly *by prayer*.

This prayer for light must be earnest and oft repeated. If we pray in a lukewarm way, if our wish to see is half-hearted or entirely selfish, we cannot expect God to answer it. And one proof of the earnestness of our prayer is that, like the blind man, we follow Christ and glorify Him. Some men are eager for knowledge. They want to see; but it is to glorify themselves and to follow their own design. This can never gain us the truth.

Conclusion.—As we are on our journey toward the heavenly Jerusalem, and as we enjoy the company of our Lord, let us profit by the lesson of to-day's Gospel. No doubt the minds of the Apostles received some light of understanding from the healing of the blind man. We know that however much they wavered for a time they followed our Lord eventually to His bitter passion. But they also rose with Him, and are now in perpetual joy. Let us study ourselves with the help of those around us, and bravely ask God : Lord let me know what is to my true interest ; give me the courage to follow Thee in the daily journey of the cross, fulfilling the duties of my state of life, and thus gaining in the light of Thy mercy the fruit of a happy resurrection after having patiently borne the trials and sufferings of this earthly life. Amen.

PARENTS EDUCATE YOUR CHILDREN!

Introduction.—God addresses his fourth commandment to the child : "Honor thy father and thy mother!" The child who ob-

serves this precept is not only loved and admired for its own virtue's sake, but its affectionate and filial deference reflects credit upon the virtue and goodness of the parents themselves. Observing a good child we naturally form a good opinion of its father or mother. Why? Because parents have it in their power to educate their children in such a way as to receive from them honor and joy.

Immediately after the command: "Honor thy father and thy mother!" God announces a special blessing upon the child that fulfills it: "That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest be long-lived upon earth!" (Exod. XX, 12.—Eph. VI, 1.).

What parent is there who does not from his heart desire both to be honored by his child and to see it lead a happy life even on earth. The condition of this double blessing is the observance of God's commands; and the observance of God's commands depends on the Christian education of your child.

Transition.—The Christian education of your child, on which your honor and its happiness depends, is given in two ways. First, by your own careful, Christian life as example. Secondly, in a Catholic school where the precepts of God are inculcated, together with other useful knowledge.

First Point.—It is in the nature of a child to do whatever it is carefully taught. Example draws it on more quickly than precept; and of all those who can influence its young heart by example or precept there is none so capable as mother and father. The child wants no reason for what it has to do. "Mamma has said so," is its supreme authority; "Mamma does so" is its first and constant rule of action.

Moreover, the child is extremely impressionable. Its soul is like soft wax and easily moulded into any shape which our action or example may give it. After a time the things which influence it become habits, and the child will remain, even against its own later convictions, what we have made it.

Hence follows the double necessity of parents, and especially mothers, teaching their little ones right early those virtues which they would have them to possess, and to be careful to show not their own faults in the presence of their children, who will learn the evil as well as the good. But if parents realize that they have neglected anything in this regard through an excessive care of the temporal interests of the child, or because they found it often impossible to

control their own faults in its presence, much of the evil consequences may still be remedied.

Second Point.—By sending your children to a Catholic school. You know that *education* does not mean simply to dress your children nicely, or to teach them to be clever and smart. We see every day how wealthy and educated sons and daughters without religion, bring disgrace upon their parents, because they do not fear God, and there is nothing to restrain them from sin. When a Catholic commits some wrong, there is hope that he may amend and correct the injury he has done, because he has been taught to confess his sin, which will be forgiven only on condition that he is really sorry for it, with a firm purpose of doing better and making reparation for any injustice committed against his neighbor. And this helps to make him change his life if he have any real faith.

It is not learning, or a fine dress or manner which inspires us with love and confidence in a man, but rather a sense of uprightness and a good heart. Now that which influences the heart is religion. And the more constantly this influence surrounds the child in its early years, the deeper will it take hold, so that, even if the good seed of early religious training be afterward choked for a time by worldliness it will often assert itself later on and secure the safety of a shipwrecked soul. Hence we Catholics are so anxious to have religious schools for our children. It gives us a security of their future happiness. The happiness of a filial love arises, as we have seen, from compliance with the law of God. "He that honoreth his mother," says the wise man in holy writ, "is as one that layeth up a treasure. He that honoreth his father shall have joy in his own children, and in the day of his prayer he shall be heard." (Ecclus. III, 5.) In a school without religion only the head is trained to be clever, but in a Catholic school the heart also is educated to goodness; and this is the more important part in life because it helps us to save our souls, which is after all the only object for which we are here.

Conclusion.—Whatever sacrifices, therefore, you make, M. B. in order to secure a Catholic education for your children, you are the gainers by doing so. You purchase honor for yourselves and for your little ones to special blessings of a happy life. Some may object that the children in the Catholic school are not always what you desire them to be. But may not the fault be at home? The

school cannot do everything. If your child is not docile and good in spite of the daily lessons of obedience and virtue it receives in the school, what might it be, if it never heard the name of God or the mention of the beautiful precept: "Children obey your parents in all things; for it is well pleasing to the Lord." (Coloss. III, 20.) Even the poorest parish school, with God in it as a teacher, is infinitely more beneficial to your child, than the most splendid school where the name of God is never mentioned. We should indeed wish to give to our children both religion and learning. But in order that we may do so, parents must help by prayer and good example and earnest support of our Catholic schools.

POINTS FOR PREACHER AND CATECHIST.

Reading and Speaking.

As to delivery (in preaching) reading is of necessity less effective, and in most cases immensely less effective for all the great purposes of oratory than speaking.

Reading is more injurious to the voice. Any one who is so unfortunate as to have become subject to laryngitis, will soon find that he can speak with much less fatigue than he can read. This shows a natural difference, though persons whose vocal organs are not diseased, may not notice it.

Let not the reader try to assume postures, gestures, or looks, such as he thinks would be appropriate to one speaking those words. To do so is not natural; it is to be an actor; and acting, however skillful, however much admired, in the pulpit is a crime.

To hear a preacher drawl out what he reads, with monotonous indifference and tediousness is revolting. To hear a good thing well read is always a pleasure. This applies particularly to the reading of the Epistles and Gospel, which is by no means an easy task, and requires careful preparation.—(*Broadus, Prepar. and Delivery of Sermons.*)

Preach the Gospel.

A critical but honest hearer observed to a clergyman: "Sir, your preaching would starve all the Christians in the world." "Starve all the Christians in the world!" said the astonished preacher; "Why, do I not speak the truth?" "Yes," replied the lady, "and so you would were you to stand in the pulpit all day and say: My name is Father Jones." Moral—Preach the Gospel.

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Preparation.

In the preparation of sermons we should employ all our faculties of intellect, memory, judgment. The quality of thought to be employed is pointed out, in the first instance, in the Gospels and Epistles of the liturgical year. They offer, as it were, a sort of constant basis for practical reflection and application. All our reading should be made with a view to contribute to their illustration in preaching.

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The *chief* preparation for the pulpit is prayer and purity of heart. You will perceive its effects, and will sometimes find that by a single suggestion the Holy Spirit will make you say things admirably calculated to benefit your hearers.—(*Lallemant, Spirit. Conf.*)

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EFFECTIVE PREACHING.

One cannot speak with effect in the pulpit unless prepared. Even a short sermon needs some definite outlining of thought beforehand.

The best way to get command of an audience is to forget oneself in the effort of bringing home some truth to the hearers. This requires serious thought for some time before the sermon, even when the latter is faithfully and safely memorized. If real feeling betrays itself in our sermons, its absence is equally noticeable no matter how smoothly the words glide from the lips.

"Preaching is neither a display of rhetoric nor an exhibition of literature, nor a glibness of tongue. It is not an exhibition of the man, interposing his borrowed finery between Christ and the people."

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ANGER IN THE PULPIT.

There are instances when the preacher feels called upon publicly to correct some evil in his parish, to chastise a known fault, or avert the continuance of some scandal among his people. On these occa-

sions it is always dangerous to speak without more than ordinary preparation. Especially is this the case when there is some personal resentment or feeling on the part of the priest. Words will flow easily enough under such circumstances, but they defeat the object of the preacher with infallible certainty if they bear sarcasm or anger in place of that dignified remonstrance and evident paternal solicitude which alone befits the occupant of the sacred chair.

Bishop Ullathorn has some admirable words on the subject of the priest who speaks under the influence of personal resentment. "Instead of falling back on his final resource, on those elementary doctrines with which he is always at home, the preacher yields himself up to his inward provocation, nurses the sore of his wounded fancy, gives the old Adam his way, lets his warmed imagination follow her unpleasant fancies, and breaks over his congregation in a distempered fit of scolding that damages himself and damages them.

If he be vain as well as weak in spirit, he will imagine he has given a powerful discourse, and that the relief he feels after firing off his temper, is a sign of the good he has accomplished. If he have spiritual sense, that is lost but for the moment, he will feel shame and regret. If you consult the faces of the people as they leave the church, they seem to say: we looked for the spirit of God, and found the weakness of man. (Eccles. Disc. XI, 278.)

"FINANCE" IN SERMONS.

On this subject the Council of Baltimore suggests that exhortations be temperate and befitting the holiness of God's temple. "De stipendiorum aut reddituum tenuitate saepe saepius verba facere, praesertim asperiori modo, summopere dedecet ministrum Christi et locum sacrum." (Tit. VIII, 215.)

HOMILETIC MONTHLY

MARCH.

2. Ash-Wednesday.
6. First Sunday in Lent.
13. Second Sunday in Lent.
20. Third Sunday in Lent.
27. Fourth Sunday in Lent.

ASH-WEDNESDAY.

Less. Joel II, 12-19.
Gosp. Matt. VI, 16-21.

Subject.—*The Meaning of Lent.*

Introduction.—The word *Lent*, in old English, signifies *Spring;* for the Lenten season is the time when the soul renews its vigor, as do all the organisms around us in nature. The earth looks still barren and dreary, and even the fair coating of snow and ice has disappeared. But beneath the ground there is going on a silent and ceaseless activity. The seed placed under the soil is breaking, and sends forth a new germ, white and small, but from which will grow, with God's blessing, the blossom and fruit whence man draws his delight and sustenance. Meanwhile the plant is in a state of preparation. This preparation consists of three elements. They are *struggle*, *change*, *growth*.

Transition.—In the same manner our heavenly Father wishes to prepare us under the salutary guidance and discipline of Holy Church. We are to send forth joyous blossoms on Resurrection day, and the sweet odor of a holy life and good fruits of virtuous deeds. But in order to do this we must pass through a *struggle* towards the light above; we must cast off the old seed; then there will be a gradual *change* in our lives, and a steady *growth* for better, higher regions, lifting our arms to heaven, bearing fruits which will

edify and sustain our fellows and rejoice our heavenly Gardener, who watches our progress all the while.

First Point.—Struggle is the law of nature. You see it everywhere. Nothing good or worthy is produced without effort, without labor and cultivation ; whilst the things that grow easily and unattended are, for the most part, only noxious weeds and useless herbs, often showy, but without substance. It is precisely so in the soul-life. Every real joy, every act which does our heart, so to speak, good, is the outcome of humiliation, self-denial, mortification. The happiest people in the world are the truly devout people. Cheerful even in the midst of trials, they look upon sufferings as only a preparatory penance which is to be followed by the certain fruit of greater happiness. Hence Our Divine Lord, when He came to instruct men in the way in which they were to reap the "glory" announced by the angels at His birth, His first injunction was : "Do penance!" Thus we read in the Gospel that after the fast in the desert, "Jesus retired into Galilee—and from that time began to preach and to say : "*Do penance, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!*" (S. Matt. IV, 17.) With the very same words his holy predecessor St. John had begun his preaching in the desert of Judea. (S. Matt. III, 2.) Everywhere throughout the public life and teaching of our Divine Redeemer we find a repetition of this thought. *If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.* (S. Luk. IX, 23.) *Strive to enter by the narrow gate : for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able.* (S. Luk. XIII, 24.)

This is the new life, the secret of Christian growth, the law of self-conquest by which we are to gain our souls. *And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away.* (S. Matt. XI, 12.)

Such is the meaning of the Lenten service and the restrictions which the Church enjoins at this holy season, so well set forth in the lesson read at Mass on this day (Ash-Wednesday). *Between the porch and the altar the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall weep, and shall say : Spare, O Lord, spare Thy people, and give not thine inheritance to reproach.* (Joel II, 17.)

This, too, was the meaning of the cross marked with ashes upon our foreheads, to remind us that death is the law of all things earthly ; that in order to live eternally we must die to ourselves ; for such is the sense of the word *mortification.*

Second Point.—But to die to oneself is not the object of life. The death of which our Lord speaks when He says: *He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for Me, shall find it* (Matt. X, 39), is simply a change from corruption to a new life—a conversion of the soul from the state of deathly sin to that of sanctifying grace. Hence the prophet's appeal to us in the name of the Lord: *Be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning. And rend your hearts and not your garments and turn to the Lord your God; for He is gracious and merciful, patient and rich in mercy.* (Less. of Ash-Wednesday.)

You see, God wants the *change of the heart,* and it is for this that He prescribes mourning and prayer and fasting. The world has its Lent, too. There is a fashionable devotion which enjoins the wearing of purple dresses; which imitates the observances of the Church by changing the hour of dinner or the kind of food; which forbids the public shows allowed at other times. But M. B. this is not enough. The change must go deeper than the external appearances or the kind of food or the publicity of amusements. These things are but signs and indications of what changes we should make within. The greed, the luxury, the vanity, the frivolity which urge us on to the things now forbidden—these are to be changed, to die and to give place to purer motives and the desire not to please ourselves, or men, but to please God. (Advert to the faults which predominate, such as the vice of intemperance in drink, forbidden amusements, domestic strife, etc.)

If we will only recognize the necessity of a *change in our lives* we shall be helped by the spirit, the exhortations and the opportunities of the Penitential season. It offers special opportunities of reflection, of preparation for a good Confession, which need not be put off to the end of Lent, but might well be made in the earlier part, in order that the change of heart might at once inaugurate *a new growth,* which is the third element of the preparation of the soul in Lent—the springtime of a fruitful life.

Third Point.—It is a peculiarity of natural growth that it is gradual and imperceptible. You can tell it only by its *results.* The small white germ just shows itself above the ground, with its little head turned down modestly. Gradually it becomes green and rises steadily up toward the sunlight of heaven, and then you know it is growing. In its growth you remark two things. It is *noiseless;*

there is no violence; you could hardly know of its growing only that you find it more developed when you return after a time. The other mark is its *increasing beauty* of color.

You will remark the same in the right growth of the soul. It is without noise. He who becomes really better makes no boast or show of it. *When you fast,* says our Lord to his disciples in the gospel of to-day, (Matt. vi, 16), *be not as the hypocrites, sad. But thou, when thou fastest anoint thy head and wash thy face; that thou appear not to men to fast, but to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee.*

The soul of him who strives after virtue becomes daily more beautiful. At times the *Church dispenses* from these mortifications which cut down our self-love. This year our Holy Father has issued a general dispensation from the Lenten fasts and abstinence, wherever the disease of grip, and famine prevail. God, the heavenly Gardener, has pruned his people in advance, has humbled them by by an affliction which weakens their bodies and reminds them of death; and this is the principal object of Lent. Nevertheless, M. B., although we may be dispensed from the fast and abstinence, we are not dispensed from doing penance, from pruning our self-love. If, then, our heavenly Gardener does not apply the pruning knife, we must take other means of shaking off the superfluous blossoms which will hinder the full growth of the fruit that we are expected to produce for heaven.

Conclusion.—God had ordained in the old law that His people should each year observe solemn fasts and a day of Atonement. The Israelite who on that day did not mourn, was to die the death. So is it with us. Lent is the time of affliction, of mortification, of dying to one's self and to sin, and the Christian who does not enter into this spirit, who does not *struggle* and *change* and begin a new *growth,* his soul will decay. The summer will not see fruit, but withered branches, perhaps never to revive into life eternal, but to be cut off and to be cast into the flames of eternal hell-fire. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

Epis. II Cor. VI, 1-10.
Gosp. Matt. IV, 1-11.

Subject.—*The Temptations of Lent.*

Introduction.—It has been said of devout people that they are usually most irritable after protracted prayer. This is not

strange. Our tempter goes about seeking whom he may destroy. He does not trouble those who serve him readily, but pursues those who struggle for light and grace. The time of Lent is a season when every faithful Catholic has to be more than usually on his guard. We have already seen that it is the spring-time when the soul strives to develop a new life by casting off the corrupted old seed and rising toward the light. It is at this time that the worm can best attack the tender germ and kill it in the very root, before it has gathered strength to survive the injury, or before there are fresh shoots which could carry on the life of the plant when one or other of the root-tendrils have been killed.

Now the temptations to which Catholics are especially liable at this time vary with different classes of people and the circumstances in which they are; but in general they bear the same character as shown in the three temptations of our Lord set before us in to-day's Gospel.

Transition.—These may be classed under the head of temptations to *gluttony*, temptations to *vanity*, and temptations to *pride*. Let us examine in advance our daily lives during this holy season, and see what we have particularly to guard against in order not to lose the graces which God has destined for us in leading us along the path of discipline as laid down by the rules of our holy Church.

First Point.—It is said of our Lord that, on returning from the desert after a long fast, He was hungry. Subject to the needs of the human nature which He had assumed in order to teach us the way of life, there was every reason why our divine Saviour should have yielded to the cravings of that nature. Yet He would not do so when the suggestion came from the devil.

There are two ways in which the devil leads to sin those who have entered upon the observance of the Lenten fast with pure motives and good intentions. Having fasted, they are hungry. When the time for taking food arrives they yield to their eager appetite in an immoderate way, and what they have gained by the previous fast and abstinence, they lose by the intemperate manner in which they indulge and glut the senses of eye and tongue at their late meal.

To others the thought suggests itself, or rather is suggested by the devil, that the weakness of their body, induced by the observ-

ance of the fast, requires a more frequent stimulus. Many otherwise sober persons are thus led on to the habit of intoxication; for the system being weak succumbs more readily to the dangerous influence of the liquor, and the fast which was intended as a blessing becomes a curse to those who yield to the false suggestion.

Mark the answer of our Lord on the occasion of the temptation to gluttony. He does not only refuse the suggestion of the demon, but He gives us a key to the source whence our real strength is to come on such occasions. *Not in bread alone does man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God.* As if He would say to us: If you obey the word of God, it will sustain you. He who commands us to fast will supply the strength which is needful to our well-being. As a matter of fact this is true, for those who observe the severest fasts are frequently the healthiest and longest lived. Witness the monks of La Trappe, the solitaries of the early Christian days, etc.

Second Point.—Since the custom of dispensation has become more extended and there are many who really could not observe the long fasts enjoined by the Lenten precept, because they are already sick, or whose habits of life and labor require food at short intervals, this temptation to gluttony does not come to them. But avoiding one pitfall, they often pass on to another which is no less destructive. There is a *concupiscence of the eye* which does not glut the stomach but seeks no less the pleasures of sense in greed of gain, in display of dress, of furniture, of preferences; in amusements which, whether public or private are equally a source of sin. You know that whilst the Church prohibits the frequentation of theatres and balls and parties, because they are out of harmony with the spirit of penance to which every Catholic is bound at this time by reason of his profession, the world on the contrary multiplies these amusements and diversions, as if by a spirit of contradiction.

Now the proper thing for us, when invited to take part in these pleasures, is, politely but firmly to decline them. The world has its seasons of retirement. A death in the family prevents the members for a certain time from appearing at public entertainments. Are we to be less courageous in the profession of our faith and its obligations than worldlings are in asserting their rights of fashion and convenience?

We not only violate the precept of our holy religion, which was not made by men but by God, but we frequently scandalize those

who are inclined to abide by the laws of the Church and are pained to see them thus openly set aside.

Third Point.—We have anticipated the third class of temptations, those that appeal to the pride of life because they are intimately bound up with the manifold ways of human vanity.

Perchance we are of the number to whom the tastes of the flesh do no longer appeal. Age or sickness may have dispensed us from fast and abstinence and removed us from the danger of sinful frivolity. Still there remains within the soul the deepest and most dangerous of evil tendencies, that of human pride. Pride has many ways of showing itself apart from vanity. It is overbearing and imperious even on the sick bed. It drags the reputation of others into the mire when it cannot exalt itself above them. It is fretful and disagreeable and distrusts others and gives an evil interpretation to their motives if it cannot blame their actions. It sows discord where peace should reign in Christian homes. This is the essence of pride. It worships itself and expects others to worship it, whereas all our love should turn to God alone. *The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve.*

Pride haunts us at all times, but this is the time when we can best perceive it and study it in our own souls, because the diversions which often clothe it in other forms are absent and truth comes nearer to us and the demon rebels more loudly against any reform in our souls.

Conclusion.—Such are the leading temptations M. B., which we must guard against at this holy time. They have many forms, many ways, but by reflection and prayer and the penitential practices suggested by holy Church we may discover them. And when we do so, let us be valiant in repelling them. *Receive not the grace of God in vain*, as the Apostle exhorts in to-day's epistle. *For, he saith: In an accepted time have I heard thee and in the day of salvation have I helped thee * * * Give no offense to any man, that our ministry may not be blamed; but in all things let us exhibit ourselves * * * in much patience in tribulations, in necessities, in distress, * * * in labors, in fastings, in chastity, * * * in charity unfeigned, in the word of truth, in the power of God; * * * as dying, and behold we live; as chastised and not killed; as sorrowful and yet always rejoicing; as needy, yet enriching many; as having nothing, and possessing all things.* (Epist. I, Sund. Lent).

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

Epist. I, Thess. IV, 1—7.
Gosp. Matt. XVII, 1—9.

Subject.—*The Hopes of Lent.*

Introduction.—The Gospel of to-day presents a singular union of two opposite elements: Labor and rest, sorrow and joy, trouble and peace. Our Lord, as the Evangelist informs us, had preached to the multitude at Cæsarea, and the burden of His sermon had been this: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and for the Gospel shall save it. For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul. And He had ended the sermon with these words: Amen I say to you, there are some of them standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Kingdom of God coming in power and the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.

After this He journeyed, it appears, in company with His three dearest disciples some twenty miles inland, and having reached Mount Thabor seeks some retired spot on its summit where they might pray. Weary with the ascent, they are suddenly charmed by a vision which comes upon them with wonderful distinctness. The forms of Moses and Elias are before them all fair with the resplendent brightness which issues from the face of Christ; an untold sense of peace takes possession of their hearts, which makes St. Peter cry out in rapturous delight: *Lord, it is good for us to be here; if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles—one for Thee, and one for Moses and one for Elias.*

But suddenly their sense is benumbed; the very brightness overshadows them and brings them down in utter fear as they hear the voice of the Eternal Father: *This is my beloved Son; hear ye Him!* And again there follows the sweetness of the touch of Christ as he bids them *Fear not!* adding: *Tell the vision to no man until the Son of Man be risen from the dead.*

Transition.—Now all this is a picture of the condition of the faithful Catholic who, having heard Christ's words about the way of the cross and the necessity of daily self-denial, ascends with Him the mountain of prayer and penitential practice. Though not assured

by the miraculous splendor of Mount Thabor, the Christian nevertheless feels the soothing influence of Christ's presence between Moses, who represents the Law of God, and Elias, who represents His promises, the assured hopes of every faithful Christian. And these hopes which Christ holds out to those who accompany Him, what are they?

First Point.—*Peace of Soul.*—Yes, M. B., they who follow Christ, abiding by His law, taking up their daily cross, they of all other men on earth earn therefrom assured serenity and peace, even here amid the trials and troubles of life. We wonder how it can be, yet we may daily be witnesses of the fact, that those who have renounced all for Christ, those who make sacrifices for the love of God, are the happiest, the most blessed people on earth. Where their treasure is their heart is also; and because their treasure is in heaven, where endless joys abound, therefore their heart is ever full of joy even amid sufferings which distract and discourage others. Hope and love make us forget the momentary pains, even as a mother accounts nothing the labor for her child, because her heart is only bent on the joy which her little one gives to her. In the same way they who serve Christ are content with Him; they know He will not abandon them, and not caring for the possessions of earth, they fear no losses. Such was the feeling of St. Peter when he cried out: Lord, it is good to be here; let us build here three tabernacles. Such is our own feeling when confiding in our Master's mercy and overcoming the natural repugnance to confess our sins, we pour out our hearts in deep contrition, and leave the confessional full of peace, and joy, and hope.

Second Point.—But the penitential season rouses other hopes besides those of peaceful trust and the feeling of something done for God and our souls, which is nothing else than the promise of our Divine Lord: *Come to Me all you that labor and are heavily burdened, and I shall refresh you.*

It gives us a certainty, an evidence, appealing at once to sense and heart, of the Divine Fatherhood. Somehow the best of us lose confidence at times. We cannot live and ground our faith on feelings alone. The very satisfaction and peace which we experience in the fulfillment of our duty as Catholics makes us at times doubtful. Men put questions at us which tempt us to deny our faith. The newspapers and books, which come in our way at every turn, are so

full of irreverence and flippant skepticism that we can hardly help being tainted by it. Even Catholics and Catholic writers speak lightly of authority ; and if we happen to see some one of whom we thought well and reverently, depart from duty and from faith, it weakens our own.

It is then that the voice of the Eternal Father comes to us on the mountain, testifying : *This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him.* We tremble, we do not know what to say or do ; but we hear that voice, and we know it is God's own, and we believe it. Thus the Lenten exercises strengthen our faith and our confidence in God as the Father who witnesses to the dwelling, in our midst, of Christ, and bids us hear His voice, sure that we are in the right, and that whatever may come against us, He will protect us who are with His beloved Son.

Third Point.—And, last of all, the Gospel of this day indicates the hope of our future resurrection. Our Lord tells the disciples not to speak of the vision until He shall have risen from the dead. In His own resurrection He foretold the resurrection of every one of those who would follow Him. The disciples did not understand fully at that time what our Lord meant, but they trusted Him. It is the same with us. We can hardly realize that all this trouble and warfare against our inclinations shall bring so much glory and happiness. Yet if we courageously carry out the teaching of the cross we shall gain in confidence as we go on. Our reward is as certain as is the resurrection.

Conclusion.—Man's greatest joys are the hopes which he purchases in sacrifice and labor. Let us apply this to the present condition of penitential practices. They have the merit of obedience. They bring peace even here on earth ; confirm our faith and confidence in the provident care and fatherhood of God ; and, lastly, they give us a sure participation in the glorious triumph of that Easter morning when all shall rise with Christ, our triumphant leader, to the joyous abodes of heaven. Surely we who have received the grace of being members of the true fold of Christ, who are His disciples, should not refuse to accompany Him. On the mountain of His holy Church have we received the revelation of His divinity. If there we find labor and trial inviting us, there, also, will we find peace and rest, and each of us may call out from his grateful heart with the Psalmist : *In peace, in the self-same I will sleep and I will rest : for Thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope*, (Ps. iv, 9). Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

Epist. Eph. V, 1-9,
Gosp. Luke XI, 14-28.

Subject.—*The strength of Lent.*

Introduction.—On one occasion the disciples of Christ complained to Him because they could not cast out devils in His name, although they had made use of the power given them. Our Lord answered them by saying: *This kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting.* (Matt. xvii, 20.) This was an argument in proof of the strength which comes from fasting, and which overcomes the enemy of our souls. St. Paul teaches us of his own experience, after he had chastised his body by fasting and mortification, saying: When I am weak then am I strong. The lives of the solitaries and countless religious, who, although constantly practicing rigorous fasts and laboring hard, are nevertheless rarely sick and reach a very old age, bear witness to the same truth. Fasting then must have the power of increasing our strength.

First Point.—In the first place the habit of mortification begets strength of purpose or, as we say, a stout heart. Indulgence weakens, resistance strengthens. This we see daily around us in nature. The animal is rendered fearless and steady by being forced close up to the danger. It is made to see that which frightens it, and to real-that the injury, which it dreads, is only apparent. Just so it is with man. He brings himself to do that which seems disagreeable to his human nature and finds that it does not harm him as he feared. By repeated practice he overcomes all difficulties, and when the habit of self-conquest has once taken hold on his heart, it becomes a positive pleasure. In this way we become accustomed to resist temptations, under which those who yield to effeminate habits of life readily fall. There is nothing that is so powerful in putting to flight the devil, as mortification and prayer. You notice how frequently men who are very strong and able bodied succumb to a slight temptation; a glass of liquor is too much for their will to resist, and they become weaker than a child under the influence of their passion. Why? Because, though they are strong and healthy, the devil has power over them and the words of our Lord in to-day's Gospel are made true: *When a strong man armed keepeth his court, those things which he possesses are in peace; but if a stronger than he come upon*

him and overcome him, he will take away all his armor wherein he trusted. On the other hand you find weak women and children bear the severest hardships for the love of God and repel every attack of temptation however strong. Why? Because God is with them, and *by the finger of God* they cast out devils

Second Point.—But the practice of penance and prayer increases our strength in another way also. It gives us special light of the *intellect*; it clears up the mind and allows us to judge correctly of things. Now intelligence and a clear judgment are a great source of power in the world. Men who use their minds much, and who do not employ stimulants, usually find that they can do their best work in the morning before they have broken their fast. An old proverb has it that a full stomach prevents application to study. Whilst then it is true that they who do bodily labor need to sustain their strength for the work, by taking food in sufficiency, it is also true that, if they restrict their sensual appetites in one way or another it will brighten their minds and in many cases direct them in corporal employment.

We can take food sufficient for our need and yet find means of mortification in doing so. A drink of water deferred for some minutes just when we most feel like having it, a reduction in the little delicacies to which we are used at other times, restraining the eye in the selection of our dishes, or eating with less haste than inclination prompts—these are methods of fasting which, whilst they do not injure the body, strengthen the soul and give it that additional light of which the Apostle speaks in to-day's Epistle: *Walk, then, as children of the light; for the fruit of the light is in all goodness, and justice, and truth.*

Third Point.—It is most frequently urged that fasting injures the body. No doubt excessive fasts would do so; and where the system is already exhausted it would be folly to recommend abstinence from nourishing foods. But it is admitted by those who have the best right to know that abstinence and fasting judiciously practiced are not only a frequent cure of disease, but favor the proper building up of the system and thus become a source of *bodily strength.* "The most frequent disorders which are incident to the human frame are occasioned by an over-repletion, which oppresses the animal powers and hinders their functions." That the Church has our corporal health in view, as a secondary motive in the

institution of Lent, appears from the Collect, in which she teaches us to pray, "that this solemn fast, which is wholesomely instituted to cure our souls and bodies, may be devoutly observed by us."

Nor must we take a slight inconvenience at first as a symptom that the abstinence or fast which the Church prescribes is hurtful to our health. Indeed, many remedies and medicines produce similar effects, such as headaches or nausea, which afterwards disappear. Those who have serious doubts as to their ability to observe the Lenten restrictions should nevertheless consult their confessors and ask them to impose on them some other penance which they can perform without risk to their health, in order that they may participate in the graces which, dispensed in the Church at this time, are a source of strength to the Christian.

Conclusion.—In conclusion let me call your attention to the passage with which the Gospel of to-day ends. A good woman in the crowd which our Lord had been addressing upon the subject of fortifying their souls against the temptations of the devil, convinced of the truth of the Saviour's words, cried out: Blessed is the womb that bore Thee and the paps that gave Thee suck. Though probably a stranger to our Blessed Lord's holy Mother, that woman realized the dignity and merit of Mary. It reminds us of one great help at our command if we should feel too timid or reluctant to battle with the foe of our souls. Ask the Blessed Mother of our Lord to make you valiant, to lead you on through this holy season, so that it may really become a source of strength in heart, in mind and in body; that hearing the word of Our Lord calling us to penance, we may keep it and thus become blessed as the women in the Gospel: *Yea, blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.* Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

Epist. Galat. IV, 22–31.
Gosp. John, VI, 1–15.

Subject.—*The Fruits of Lent.*

Introduction.—When spring comes to an end, and the husbandman sees the crop growing forth out of the ground, he feels a secret joy; his past labors, his early risings, the worry and sweat are forgotten, for he discerns the fruit which he may hope to reap.

So it is with us who entered Lent with a good will to work out some fruit for eternity. That spring-time of the soul is drawing to a close. The sadness of Passion-tide is indeed still before us; but it is like the pruning period of late spring when the gardener cuts off the last useless branches of the vine. Though tears burst forth, the cutting will help the growth to a quicker ripening of the fruit. In a similar way the sorrows of Holy Week are the last preparation for the joyous rising on Easter morning.

If then we have spent our Lent, thus far, as we proposed at the beginning, in cutting off the pleasures of sense and giving more of our time to serious thought, to prayer, and self denial—are there any fruits visible which allow us to realize in some measure the hopes which we entertained of peace and joy and strength of heart, and many blessings of soul and body?

Transition.—Assuredly these blessings must be felt by those who possess them and yet we may not be conscious of our advantage until we reflect on it. A child in the house of its parents may be restrained and yet possess all things in the very fact of being the heir of its father; whilst in the same house there may be an orphan or a servant treated equally well, whilst yet there is a great difference in the affectionate freedom which the one enjoys and the implied submission exacted from the other.

The Epistle of to-day calls our attention to this difference between the children of God who serve Him in love, and those who, although created by Him, are not children of His household, but of the bond-woman, the world, whom they serve. This then is the fruit of our allegiance to Christ and His holy Spouse the Church, that it makes us children, *children—not of the bond-woman*, the world, *but of the free*; *by the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free.* (Epist. of the day). And in this freedom of the children of God are summed up all the fruits, all the precious prerogatives of the Catholic who has not broken his allegiance to God and His holy Church.

First Point.—Every reasonable man loves liberty. It is the cry of all the world. We fight for it, expose our lives and make countless other sacrifices to maintain it. Still we may possess all outward liberty and do what we like and yet be slaves to our passions. The greatest victory which a man can gain is the victory over himself. This is the truth which the Church has constantly taught us during these days; and which makes us free, for in this liberty we possess every good gift of the children of God.

It is sometimes said by those who do not understand our religion that Catholics are slaves to the priests and to the Pope, because they readily obey their precepts. But the accusation is foolish. I ask you, M.B., whether the soldier who obeys his general and shows him respect, is less of a freeman, than the citizen who has not taken upon himself the glorious task of defending his country. We Catholics account it the highest privilege to serve a King whose children we are, the defense of whose honor means defense of our liberty in the truest sense of the word. He who observes the law is most free from penalty, although it places a salutary restraint upon him by his own deliberate choice. If we are Catholics and take upon ourselves the glorious service of Christ, we are so not by force, but by our free will, and that free will is a blessing, the fruit of the baptismal grace, which regenerated us in the bosom of our holy faith.

Second Point.—And with the freedom of the truth, with the liberty by which we are enabled to cast off the bondage of concupiscence by reason of our childhood in the Catholic Church and the obedience to her commands, with that freedom there comes to us another fruit as the reward of our filial submission. That second fruit is the *freedom from punishment* for sin. Not only does the penitential season of Lent teach us to combat temptation and deliver us from the demon of sin, but when, by an unfortunate forgetfulness of our duty, we have violated God's command in the past, we are enabled by the abundant mercy which flows to us from a sincere penance to wipe out the guilt of transgression and thus to cancel the eternal punishment due to it. (Effects of Easter Confession and of the many special Indulgences attached to the pious practices of devotion at this time, ex. gr., the Stations of the Cross, Rosary, Benediction of the Bl. Sacrament, etc.)

Third Point.—There are other and greater fruits, besides, which follow on the dutiful observance of Lent. They are symbolized in the Gospel of to-day. Our Lord feeds the large multitude of over 5,000 people, who had followed Him in order to be fed by the spiriual doctrine which He taught. The thought of that vast crowd following the Saviour, hanging, as it were, on His lips, forgetful of food and drink, is something that must touch our hearts.

However, to us this miraculous multiplication of the loaves and fishes on the Mount beyond the Sea of Galilee has a still deeper meaning. It signifies the wonderful manna of heaven, the Bread of

Eternal Life, which every faithful Catholic prepares himself to receive at Easter in Holy Communion. This is the fruit of all other fruits which we gather as the result of the Lenten preparation. *I am*, says the Eternal Truth, *the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever.* (S. John, VI, 51.) Yes, M. B., this is the true fruit of the Tree of Life, which will secure us an immortal existence, free from sorrow and care, even as it would have been in Paradise had our first parents never sinned.

Conclusion.—Can we regret the sacrifices of abstinence and self-denial, of prayer or fast, when we recall these fruits of our adoption into the fold and household of Christ? Certainly, no. And those who have been remiss in purchasing so glorious a privilege of the liberty as God's children, let them make use of the still remaining days ; let them prepare their hearts for the reception of that fruit, which begets all others in the devout Communion of the Son of God. *He that has an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches: To him that overcometh I will give the hidden manna.* (Apoc. II, 17.)

HOMILETIC MONTHLY

APRIL.

3. Passion Sunday.
10. Palm Sunday.
17. Easter Sunday.
24. Low Sunday.

PASSION SUNDAY.

Epist. Heb. IX, 11-15.
Gosp. John VIII, 46-59.

Subject.—*The Shadow of the Crucifix.*

Introduction.—An ingenious artist has left us a touching and suggestive picture. The Christ, at the age of eleven or twelve, stands with his face turned toward the East and with outstretched arms, as is the custom of the devout Hebrew when in prayer. At some distance, near an open window, is Mary, His holy Mother, her gaze fixed, as if in agony, towards the Child, behind whose figure the golden sunlight, streaming in, forms and reveals to her the purple shadow of a cross. Thus the artist expresses the first foreboding which Mary had, after Simeon's prophecy in the Temple, of Good Friday, when she was to stand at the foot of the cross on Calvary.

Transition.—In a similar way Passion Sunday marks the beginning of those sorrows which we commemorate in Holy Week. Epistle and Gospel, and the whole liturgy of this sacred season, give us a forecast, a shadow of the cross. The feast of the Seven Dolors, occurring on Friday of this week, reminds us of how we can best measure the meaning of that sacred sign of our redemption by viewing it in her light, who could enter so much more intimately into the Sacred Heart of her Divine Son.

What could the shadow of the cross have suggested to Mary? First of all, the thought that her own most beautiful and innocent

Child was to be the *Victim* of that cruel sacrifice. This was a hard thought; but there was coupled with it another which counteracted it, so to say, by a world's weight of consolation. It was the thought that this sacrifice would *redeem* the fallen race of Adam. *Sorrow* great as the ocean, *consolation* wide as the universe; these two reflections combined in her Immaculate Heart like the two beams of the cruel gibbet which gave rise to them.

First Point.—When we gaze attentively upon the crucifix it reveals to us—

a. A picture of the "Man of Sorrows," a brother piteously wounded, a victim of the most shameful and inhuman cruelty. He, the "despised and the most abject of men," hunted for more than three years by the suspicions of a jealous caste of Pharisees, subject to every kind of derision and hateful mockery, expelled from the Temple by the authorities of the Synagogue, His Sacred Heart experienced to the last the keenest humiliations. And mark, He who suffers thus is in every sense—

b. *An innocent victim.* It was not as if one of us generously offered his life for the atonement of some wrong in which all had shared—no. He was without guilt, a pure creature among those who bent under the reproach of sin. He had been the one solitary son of Adam, whose virtue by anticipation rendered His Mother's virginal body free from even the inheritance of original sin. In addition to this, He had been a constant benefactor to those around Him. The confines of Palestine from the Mediterranean to the Jordan, from north to south, re-echoed the grateful acknowledgments of thousands whose sufferings of body and soul His compassionate mercy had relieved.

But if our hearts are touched with this sad reflection at the sight of the crucifix, there is also an infinite sweetness of consolation in the thought that—

Second Point.—This sacrifice of the "Innocent Lamb" has wrought our redemption. *He was wounded for our iniquities. He was bruised for our sins: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed.* (Isa. liii, 5.)

a. He was God. His merit was infinite; and thus *He alone could pay* the debt that was written against mankind in the

offence of the infinite majesty of God. The ransom must be proportionate to the dignity which is injured. Christ, therefore, the second Person of the adorable Trinity, He who could say: *Before Abraham was made, I am*, offered Himself a willing victim. "I am ready," He says with the Psalmist, "for scourges." (Ps. xxxvii, 18.) And we see before us the sacrifice of love. *They have dug my hands and feet; they have numbered all my bones.* (Ps. xxi, 17.) *They gave me gall for my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.* (Ps. lxviii, 22.)

b. The effect is wrought to our everlasting joy and consolation. Thus speaks the Apostle St. Paul: *The Blood of Christ, who offered Himself without spot to God, shall cleanse our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God. And therefore He is the Mediator of the New Testament; that by means of His death, for the redemption of those transgressions which are under the former testament, they that are called may receive the promise of eternal inheritance in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Epistle of the day.)

Third Point.—The recognition of this sacrifice of our dearest Lord lays upon us the two-fold duty of confidence and gratitude.

a. Confidence is an essential characteristic of subject, friend or child. Who is there that has not need to fear and tremble over the results of committed sin? None. But there is none, also, who may not turn toward the cross on which his Redeemer hangs and say: He, in His infinite mercy, has paid all the debt of sin and mine too, if only I place myself under His royal standard of the cross and follow Him henceforth.

b. And with confidence the sense of gratitude becomes stronger as we go on. There is no end of sin. Even in our best efforts we feel the admonition of our weakness which makes us fall and fall again. But then we may look upon the cross and gain fresh strength to rise, singing a canticle of thanksgiving for this unending fount of divine mercy.

Conclusion.—Look at your crucifix, my Christian, and it will remind you of the one that stood on Calvary. The cross on your wall or in your hand is but the image, the shadow of the reality on which your everlasting safety depends. Do you see the veiled

images of the cross here in the church to-day? Well, it recalls to our minds how our Lord hid Himself when the Jews drove Him out of the temple courts and took up stones to kill Him because He had told them that He was the Son of God. If the Jews refused to believe, we believe Him with all our hearts. Then let us follow Him in retirement, and study and reflect on the meaning of the cross whose shadow we have just outlined, and which will be better understood as we go over the sufferings of our Divine Redeemer on Good Friday night. Amen.

PALM SUNDAY.

Less. Exod. XV, 27,—XVI, 7.
Gosp. Matt. XXI, 1-9.
Epist. Philip II, 5-11.
The Passion, Matt. XXVI-XXVII, 1-66.

Subject.—*The Procession of Palms.*

Introduction.—There is a special Gospel with its corresponding Lesson read for the Blessing of Palms on this day; but as Palm Sunday also marks the beginning of Holy Week, the liturgy of the Mass introduces us into this solemn conclusion of Lent by the reading of the Passion.

As the blessing and carrying of Palms appeals to us in the first place we may fitly meditate its meaning, so that the procession of those who take the little blessed branch with them to-day to their homes may be the better understood, and all may realize with what disposition they should carry this sweet emblem both of pain and joy.

Transition.—The Evangelist describes how the crowd of grateful Israelites forming the procession which led to Jerusalem, *spread their garments in the way;* and *cut boughs from the trees and strewed them in the way*, and how they cried *Hosannah to the Son of David.* In imitation of the action of the Jews we, too should welcome our Lord to His temple by

a.—Spreading our garments beneath His feet;

b.—Carrying palm branches, and

c.—Proclaiming a heartfelt Hosannah to the Son of David.

First Point.—Our garments (if we apply the term in a figurative and spiritual sense) are our external habits. There are few of us who have not need to take them off and subject them to Christ, so as to have them renewed and sanctified.

Every faithful Catholic will indeed make his confession for the Easter season and renew his interior ; but we should also attend to our outward behaviour. The long season of penance has reminded us in many ways what we owe to God and our neighbor; the end of it should bring a thorough renewal not only of the heart, but of our habits of life which should become a constant and joyous tribute to God. (Specify certain customs, general or local, unbecoming to those who profess to follow Christ.) *Brethren, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ. . . . . taking the form of a servant, being made the likeness of men, and in habit found as man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.*—(Epistle of the Mass.)

Second Point.—The palm branches which the Jews cut from the trees and strewed in the way are emblematic of victory, but to us they are moreover the symbols of martyrdom. Hence, whilst in one sense they assure us of the approaching triumph of Easter, which the soul of the Christian, renewed in penance, shall celebrate together with the risen Christ, they emphasize the truth that this triumph implies also a martyrdom.

We have to cut our palm branch from the tree—the tree of the cross. We have to carry it in the trials and sufferings which are each man's allotted cross. We have to strew it in the way, that is to say our inconveniences, our labors, our sufferings have to ease the path of others and give glory to Christ.

Third Point.—And last of all, the heart gives expression to its feeings of grateful sympathy in the cry of Hosannah. The Hebrew word Hosannah signifies "save us," but it has a second meaning, implying a joyful welcome, a heartfelt salutation, and it was in this second sense that the Jews used it on the occasion of our Lord's entrance into Jerusalem.

To us it has both meanings. We crave mercy at the hands of our dear Lord, and we also gladly bid Him welcome into our city. (Thursday next—Holy Thursday—we may give Him a practical proof of our joy and love at His approach by receiving Him in Holy Communion ; it is the truest expression of Hosannah in the

Christian sense, viz.: as a cry for mercy in the confessional and the canticle of welcome at the altar in the reception of the Most Blessed Eucharist.)

Conclusion.—Take the little spray of palm leaves with you; put it reverently in some honored place in your homes, for it is blessed with a benediction that says continually: Lord, shield this house and all its devout inmates from harm of soul and body. And when you look upon it morn and night let it be a reminder of how you are to carry the burden of life in meek resignation; how it will, thus borne, lead you to victory with Christ meek and humble of heart, who, through sorrow, obtained for us joy unspeakable, but who would have us share in some part of the trial, if we would be partakers of the fruit of the Cross. The Martyrology tells of a young Christian called the martyr of the Easter joy. It was in the year 459 when the Vandals surrounded a church in which the faithful were assembled to celebrate the Paschal solemnity. Just as the youth who stood in the sanctuary was singing the Alleluia an arrow struck and pierced his throat. His blood, mingled, so to speak, with the precious blood of the sacrifice on the altar, was truly an offering such as each of us is in one sense or other called upon to make at this holy time.

Let us then unite our hearts with the Sacred Heart of Him in whose glorious train we hope one day to sing an Alleluia that has no mingling of sorrow but echoes the sweet harmonious sounds of unending joys. Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY.

Epist. 1, Cor. V, 7-8
Gosp. Mark XVI, 1-7.

Subject.—*The Symbolism of the Easter Egg.*

Introduction.—This day is eminently a day of joy in the Church. The sadness of Lent, as a salutary preparation for the Easter-festival, has given way to a feeling of universal gladness. "The Lord has risen," the hope of our own resurrection to eternal joy on the last day has been renewed and gratitude fills the heart of every Christian

that he is of the number of followers of the triumphant Saviour. In token of this joy, we hear on every side the greeting "A happy Easter" and presents pass from hand to hand as expressions of the good will and the hope which our holy faith inspires on this occasion.

There is in nearly every country a custom of giving Easter-eggs especially to the children. The usage is not without its meaning, and to the Christian, both young and old, it was originally intended as a lesson of truth taught by our holy religion. As it may prove a more practical and lasting sermon, than words can do, to know this meaning, let us take this occasion to explain the usage so common even amongst non-Catholics; so that, when you offer henceforth the pretty egg to child or friend, it may become an occasion of reading them in the act a kindly lesson of faith and hope and charity.

Origin of the Custom of presenting Easter Eggs.

It is said that the custom among Christians of presenting Easter-eggs dates back to the third century and that it had its origin in a strange incident which happened to the mother of the Emperor Marcus Severus. On the day of the child's birth—so goes the story—an egg of natural blood-red color was brought to the sick mother. Being a pagan and superstitious she asked a soothsayer what the meaning of this freak of nature could be. The answer was, that her new-born child, though of humble extraction, would one day rule the Empire of Rome. The mother kept her secret for fear of incurring the odium of the Imperial government. But when, years after, Severus was actually chosen Emperor, she told the story; and the Romans congratulating themselves on so virtuous a ruler being set over them expressed their joy by mutual gifts of red-stained eggs. This symbol of gratitude was retained by many christian converts from paganism, who thenceforth showed their gratitude on Resurrection-day at having obtained a new King, the blessed Saviour Jesus Christ.

First Point.—The form, the properties, the uses of the egg express in various ways the Sacred Humanity of our Lord.

You see the shell. Its simple round form hardly suggests that there is within it a perfect living organism. Yet you know how that shell which is made up of clay (carbonate of lime) contains a wonderful little world of life which silently and in a mysterious manner develops, under the influence of heat, until after the third week it suddenly breaks the outer shell and bursts forth a perfect creature, able to take care of itself.

So far the egg is a striking *symbol of the Resurrection* of our Lord.

He appeared to us in the humble form of man; but the earthly shell of humanity contained a life divine, which after the lapse of thirty years of hidden life, and three more of evangelic labor and suffering, and then after three days in the tomb, broke forth a perfect body, a transfigured Christ who rising of His own will and strength proved His Divine origin and fulfilled the promise of our redemption.

And in this we are like to Him. The venerable Bede calls the egg "a symbol of hope," because like its shell, our bodies made of earth shall be cast off and our true life rise out of the mouldering clay to follow our Divine Lord in the resurrection. Only there is this difference between His Sacred Body and our mortal clay, that the former has become sanctified and transformed by the intimate union with the Divine Person, and hence shall remain forever adorable in that inseparable union with the Godhead, whilst our flesh sown in corruption will assume a new form of incorruption in order to be fit partakers of the heavenly inheritance.

Second Point.—But in the fact that Christ's Sacred Body has been informed by the Divine Personality we find a second illustration of Catholic truth through the figure of the Easter-egg.

The egg is *not only life-containing*, but it is also *life-giving*. Of all food it is the most nutritious, it contains more real food in proportion to its weight and size than meat. Physicians recommend its yolk, which is easily digestible, as the best food for invalids; whilst the white and even the shell (as antacid) of the egg serve for medicinal and clarifying purposes in pharmacy.

In this manner the egg becomes a true figure of the Sacred Body of our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament, where it serves as our food and sustenance of soul. (Food in especial manner of this holy season in the Easter-Communion.)

Third Point.—Apart from these qualities of the egg which suggest fruitful thought to the Christain on this day, we find further lessons in the outward figure and in the color of the Easter-egg. The round *form* has always been suggestive of *eternity* because the circle has neither beginning nor end. The red *color* with which the egg is usually stained reminds us both of the bloody *sacrifice* which our Lord undertook in order to accomplish the victory which ended in the resurrection; and it also indicates the *burning love* which prompted this sacrifice. It likewise tells the consoling story of how

our original innocence, symbolized by the original whiteness of the egg—having been lost—was washed in the Precious Blood of Christ and thus restored us to the privilege of the resurrection.

Fourth Point.—Such is the meaning, my brethren, of the popular custom of distributing Easter-eggs. Whilst it serves as an expression of our joy and gratitude, of affection and friendship, let it likewise be to us a token of the *faith* which we profess in the resurrection of our Lord from the dead ; for *if Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain*, says the Apostle, (I. Cor. xv, 14,) but he adds immediately : *Christ is risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep.* (I. Cor. xv, 20.)

Thus our *hope* too is bound up in our Saviour's glorious rising from the tomb. *I am the resurrection and the life*, He says, *he that believeth in me, although he be dead, shall live.* (St. John xi, 25). Like the breaking of the shell, which sets free the life of the young bird, so shall our immortal souls, wrapt in the frail cover of an earthly body, be set at liberty on the last day : *In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet : for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again incorruptible ; and we shall be changed, for this corruptible must put on incorruption ; and this mortal must put on immortality.* (I. Cor. xv, 51.)

And this promise finds its fulfillment in the union of charity, in the love that binds us in the holy communion with the Catholic Church, in the participation of that Sacred Body which is our life, which, like the egg, not only contains but communicates its strength to those that hunger and thirst after justice. *I am the living Bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live for ever, and the Bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.* (St. John vi, 51.)

Conclusion.—Find consolation in this, my brethren, you who have received this day the Most Precious Body of our Lord, and thus worthily participated in His joy and glory. And you, my brethren, who have not partaken as yet of this glorious prerogative, the pledge of eternal salvation, when you look upon the Easter-egg remember what it teaches, and feed upon that sacred food of which it is the symbol.

Let not your rejoicing amid the common gladness be that of the frivolous who are like empty eggs, floating on the waters because there is within no sustenance, no solid hope of eternal life, and

whose shell only covers rottenness and corruption. No; let there be a healthy bright exterior, as symbolized by the beautiful Easter-eggs which pass among us at this holy time, but within full of all that is good and healthy; full of life and virtuous energy, so that when the outward shell breaks in twain we may see the fulfillment of our present hope, rising with the wings of faith and love on the last glorious Resurrection day. Amen.

LOW SUNDAY.

Epist. I John V, 4-10.
Gosp. John XX, 19-31.

Subject.—*The white Robes of the Christian.*

Introduction.—In the old Church, of early Christian days, Easter Saturday was the day on which the new converts to the faith were solemnly baptized in presence of the entire congregation. According to a beautiful custom, which is still observed in the administration of the sacrament of baptism when a white veil is placed upon the little child, the neophites came to the church each day of the Easter week, dressed in spotless robes of white, and assisting at mass with lighted candles in their hands, received Holy Communion. But on this day, that is the Sunday following Easter, they put off these white garments and made a solemn profession, that henceforth they would retain them fair in their hearts by observing that purity of soul to which they had pledged themselves when they received the holy sacrament of regeneration. Hence this day is called *White* Sunday. It is also called *Low* Sunday, because, although it is the octave of the highest feast of the year, it is celebrated with less solemnity than the exuberant joy of the Resurrection suggests, because it is meant to bring us to the practical duties imposed by our regeneration as children of Christ.

Transition.—And this is indicated by the first words of the Mass to-day, "Quasi modo geniti," which mean, "We, as it were, recently born to a new life." It is a day, then, on which we are to *recall the pledge of our regeneration.* We, too, received the white garment in baptism; and though we have laid aside the outward token, we vowed to keep the robes of our hearts in stain-

less innocence all the days of our lives. Have we done so? Let us answer this question by briefly examining the pledge of our baptism.

First Point.—When, in virtue of Christ's merits, we were cleansed through the baptismal waters from original sin, we became children of Christ and members of the Church. This implied a great inheritance, the promise and certainty of an everlasting kingdom; but it also implied a two-fold duty. First we *renounced* the devil and all his works and pomp; secondly we *put on the armor of Christ*, became members of His Church militant, soldiers and defenders of God's truth in word and deed.

Need I prove to you that we must avoid sin if we would be true children of Christ? And sin lurks in the world and in the love of the things of the world, for in these are wrapt up the works and the pomps of the devil. *Love not the world nor the things which are in the world*, says St. John (I, St. John II, 15). *If any man love the world the charity of the Father is not in him.*

When you put on the robe of innocence at the time your godparents brought you to the baptismal font—the priest laid the fair veil of innocence upon your head and said: "Receive this white garment, and preserve it unspotted that you may thus carry it before the throne of our Lord Jesus Christ and have eternal life." The gift of innocence was strengthened by the gift of faith and by it we were capable in later years to avoid grievous sin and persevere in good. Have we done so?—and if not, was it not because we forgot our baptismal pledge or carelessly exposed ourselves to temptation? *Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist ye, strong in faith* (I Pet. v, 8).

Second Point.—But we were not only, as faithful children of our heavenly Father, to avoid snares and deceits of the devil and keep our garments, that is our hearts uncontaminated from the lusts and the vanities of wordliness. Another duty devolves upon us, and that is to fight for the heavenly kingdom. *Put ye on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil* (Eph. vi, 11). These words of the Apostle are our watchword. We are soldiers of Christ, members of a militant Church, and only by battling faithfully and courageously can we hope to enter the triumphant Church in heaven.

Now the battle is not one only against sin but it is also a *battle for truth.* In these days of doubt and skepticism, of defection from the truth of Christ, of Liberalism which lessens the strictness of truth that it may gain the approval of men, there is much danger of going astray. Even the good are often corrupted by the specious and plausible reasoning of those who appear to be great and good. Those who have been well trained in our holy faith are often led to wonder at the change of sentiment around them. We are entering those evil days foretold by our Divine Lord—when faith would vanish from the earth and men shall ask themselves in anxious doubt: Where is the Christ?—What answer can we make, my brethren? Have we no assurance to guide us safely amid the gloom and darkness of error and false principles? Surely yes, when we were baptized, a lighted candle was placed in our hands by the priest in the name of our holy Church. "Receive this burning light and keep thy baptism without reproach; observe the law of God so that when the Lord shall come at the nuptial feast thou mayest meet Him in company with the Saints in heaven unto eternal life." Such were the words then spoken to us.

Well, that light still burns before us in the teaching of our Catholic faith. Hold on to the doctrine delivered to you. Hold on to the faith of your Fathers the holy Roman Catholic Church. Let no man sway you, or persuade you that the old faith has changed, that Rome is behind the new age of progress and civilization. No, our minds and hearts are still human, subject to error. We need the same guide as of old, Christ, our Lord, who can never change and who has left the deposit of truth in the Catholic Church, with its head, the soverign Pontiff, whom God will ever assist as He assisted the High Priests of old, Moses and the Prophets, that they might not lead men astray, though they themselves were but erring men.

And in this connection let me remind you, my brethren how the first quality of a good soldier is *loyalty* to his leader. Not the uniform makes a faithful defender of his country, but the love he bears his captain and the readiness with which he obeys his commands. Our captain, he who represents to us Christ our King, is the supreme Pontiff. Let us ever hearken to his voice. We cannot go astray if we follow him who from St. Peter's lofty seat has safely led the Catholic world amid endless trials and persecutions, so that this day our holy Church stands as of old—unchanged in doctrine of truth though men have changed and institutions altered and kingdoms grown out of fashion and tottered to ruin. We profess the same teaching,

we acknowledge the same leader to whom we vowed our fidelity as infants at the baptismal font, and if an Angel from heaven came to announce to us another Gospel than that which we received then, we shall not heed him, knowing that God cannot contradict Himself, that Christ our Chief must have forseen all things and made His truth to last forever and that He bade us to cling to the rock of St. Peter, to be faithful in our allegiance to the Holy See.

Conclusion.—On this day it was the usage in the church of old that Catholics in a body renewed their baptismal vows. Let us do so at least in our hearts, bound together by the union of one Faith, one Baptism, one Lord, one Church, promising to avoid the snares of the devil, of the world and its vain pomps, and pledging ourselves anew to the adherence, as valiant soldiers of Christ and loyal sons to our Holy Church and its head the Sovereign Pontiff in Rome. Amen.

(Here the renewal of the Baptismal vows as made by the children at their first Holy Communion, may be read from the pulpit, as is customary at missions—clause after clause—to be repeated by the congregation in a loud and distinct voice.)

NOTES FOR THE PREACHER AND CATECHIST.

The True Style.

"*Non doctor verbis serviat, sed verba doctori* is the wise and true principle of eloquence as laid down by St. Augustine."

"The orator who is governed by good taste causes his hearers to forget the speaker in the words which he utters, and, as a natural consequence, he conceals his art under the simplicity and modesty of his language." "The preacher who bestows all his attention upon the mere turn of his phrase, the choice of his expression, and the harmony of his periods, will most substanially interfere with the force, the energy, the strength and the freedom of his composition."

(*Potters "Sacred Eloquence."*)

Frame of Mind.

"Often recollect your character and station in life. I am a man and not a boy. To crowd my discourse with puerile ornaments is like an academic just come from school. All I write must be judici-

ous, or it will be contemptible. I am a servant of God, and not of the world or of men · · · I am to preach the gospel, that gospel which Christ brought down from heaven. Am I a preacher among plain Christians, not scholars or courtiers? Let my sermons be adapted to their capacity. Lastly, I and my hearers are dying creatures. I am perhaps composing my last sermon, a sermon which I may not live to deliver. This method of recollecting yourself produces a genuine air of seriousness, profitable to you and your hearers."

(*Doddridge.—Rules for the Composition of a Sermon.*)

The Voice.

"If we mean to speak well, we must have due regard to the pitch or key of our voice, so as to be heard without any difficulty; and at the same time to be able to rise or fall higher or lower with equal ease, according to our subject.

"If we pitch too high we lose the reins and government of our voice, and that variety which is essential to harmony. If we pitch too low, we shall not be heard. The medium pitch is best in general. But the place we speak in, the distance of our hearers, and the powers of voice which we possess, must determine this."

(*Eades.—Eloquence of the Pulpit.*)

Correct Pronunciation.

"Although we are not required like the Ephræmites, to pronounce the word *Shibboleth*, at the peril of our lives, it is nevertheless of importance, if we mean to speak well and would not divert the attention of our hearers from the things we speak, to call them by true and proper names; we mean such as are established by the practice of the most learned and eloquent. This is in some places difficult to attain; however we may find it worth our notice to draw up a catalogue of all the words which we may have occasion to pronounce, especially those in scripture."—(*Eades.—Eloquence.*)

A Loud Voice.

"It is false oratory to seek to persuade or affect by mere vehemence of voice.

"An overstrained voice is very inconvenient to the speaker as well as disgustful to judicious hearers. It exhausts his spirits to no

purpose ; and takes from him the proper management and modulation of his voice according to the sense of his subject. And, what is worst of all, it naturally leads him into a tone.

"Every man's voice indeed should fill the place where he speaks ; but if it exceeds its natural key, it will be neither sweet, nor soft, nor agreeable, because he will not be able to give every word its proper and distinguished sound."—(*Mason.—Elocution.*)

THE TEACHING OF THE CATECHISM.

(*From an allocution by Rt. Rev. Dr. Moriarty to his Clergy.*)

"We are called to pour the light of God upon the darkened intellect of man, to reveal to earth the secrets of heaven.—How is this to be done? What are the appointed methods of the Church?

"The first and most effectual is *the teaching of the catechism.*

"We find this form of instruction in the very infancy of the Church. The catechumen was catechised by the priest. The Council of Trent, by a solemn enactment, defined our obligation in this respect. 'The Bishops shall take care that at least on the Lord's day and other festivals, the children in every parish be carefully taught the rudiments of the faith, and obedience towards God and their parents, by those whose duty it is, and who shall be constrained thereunto by their Bishops,—if need be, even by ecclesiastical censures.'

"You are in the habit of spending a month or more every year in your chapels, preparing the children for confirmation or first communion.

"Besides this opportunity of catechetical instruction which comes once in a year, and the Sunday Catechism which comes once a week, we have our schools in which the Christian doctrine may be taught every day. It is my belief, that *there is no part of the Church where the priest has such facility of securing the instruction of the children of his parish, as he has in those schools, of which he is the manager or patron.*

"Now, do we use to its full extent this opportunity? Do we visit the schools?—How often in the month does the parish priest or curate give religious instruction in the schools? We are told, they have not the time, and yet on other occasions we are told that for half the year they have little or nothing to do.

"I will ask you to remember this. Place a well-catechised Christian in the backwoods of America or in the frozen regions of the North, and without sacraments or sacrifice, or any of the external helps of religion, he can save his soul. Place a man in the very capital of Christianity, let him live in the very house of God, let him have access to all the sacraments and ceremonies of the Church—without a knowledge of the Christian doctrine, everything else that religion offers will be useless.

"*Let us, then, set down the catechism well taught, as the first great constituent of a good parish.*"—(*Diocesan Syn. of Kerry, 1864.*)

THE CATECHISM FOR ADULTS.

"Let the Catechism be what it can and ought to be, that is to say, grave, serious, instructive—in short, let it be, in the heart of those who conduct it, apostolic, though still preserving in its form its charm and its needful attractiveness. Let it thoroughly imbue souls with the great Christian doctrines; let there be nothing about it effeminate, or vain, or enervating; and then it will give the children not only, not even chiefly, the joy of pious feeling, but the *taste for true virtue*, the *courageous acceptance of duty*, the fulfilling of the commandments, *the real, true Christian life.*

"Above all, the good Catechism of Perseverance will lay the foundations of practical piety in the solid and serious teaching of Christianity, for without this well-grounded religion there is no true Christian man or Christian woman; it is through this that they can influence souls, inspire them, and imprint upon them the strong and holy practices of the faith.—(*Ministry of Catechising.*)

"Religious education, that is to say, the direction of the life and heart, the formation of the will, the conscience, the character, this is the great object of the Catechism. But there must be strict discipline, there must be silence, there must be perfect attention and good behavior; if the children come when they like and as they like, if inattention and carelessness creep in, there is an end of it; everything is lost, nothing of good will find its way into their souls, the most powerful language will slide off them as on a waxed cloth. —(*Ibid.*)

HOMILETIC MONTHLY

MAY.

1. Second Sunday after Easter.
8. Third Sunday after Easter. (Patronage of St. Joseph.)
15. Fourth Sunday after Easter.
22. Fifth Sunday after Easter. (Rogation-week.)
26. Feast of the Ascension (or Sunday within the Octave).

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Subject.—*Unity of the Catholic Church.*

Introduction.—The beautiful month of May, dedicated in an especial manner to the Blessed Mother of our Lord, awakens in every Catholic heart a strange sense of joy and gratitude at the thought that we are the children of one great Mother. And as we address Mary as our common protectress and Queen, we realize that we are the members of the one true fold of Christ, her divine Son, who assumed to Himself her immaculate flesh that He might redeem us, the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Thus the thought of our heavenly Queen and Mother unites with that of the Good Shepherd and brings home to us the reflection of the unity of the Catholic Church. For everywhere, this day, throughout the world, is read from our altars the Gospel which we have read here, and everywhere, this day, pious hands of virgins are decking with sweetest flowers the shrines of our Blessed Lady, the fair Queen of May.

Transition.—The peace and harmony betokened by this union of hearts in Catholic lands throughout the world, is so great a boon that we should fitly foster it on our part. How to do this shall be the object of our brief reflection upon the Gospel of to-day.

First Point.—The unity of the Catholic Church is exemplified by a fold of sheep which follow the lead of a faithful and wise shepherd. We are the sheep. Christ is the shepherd. He is anxious to keep us together in one fold, for He knows that on this union depends our safety. If one sheep separates from the rest and goes astray, it may fall in the way of the wolf. Hence our Lord prayed on the very eve of His death: *Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, whom Thou hast given Me; that they may be one, as We also are.* (St. John xvii, 11.)

Now that which above all else preserves this unity among the members of Christ's fold is peace, and peace means patience. *Be careful*, says the Apostle of the Gentiles, *to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. One body and one spirit: as you are called in one hope of your vocation.* (Ephes. iv, 3.) Watch the action of the sheep as they follow their shepherd. There is no contention, no snarling, no wounding of each other. Patiently they yield to one another and to the hand that leads them. Without guile or reluctance they go to the slaughter to be sacrificed for the benefit of others. *Dearly beloved, Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. Who, when He was reviled, did not revile; when He suffered He threatened not, but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly: Who His own self bore our sins in His body upon the tree; that we being dead to sin, should live to justice: by whose stripes you were healed. For you were as sheep going astray; but you are now converted to the shepherd and bishop of your souls.* (Epistle.)

Second Point.—If the patience and forbearance which produce peace, fosters union of hearts, *obedience* secures for that union the strength which comes from a single-minded purpose and a well regulated discipline. *I know mine*, says our Lord, *and mine know Me.* And how do they know Him? Because, as He tells us, *they hear my voice.* This is the secret of the wonderful spirit of harmony and union which exists in matters of Catholic doctrine and worship throughout Christendom. Go where you will, into the most distant lands, where the people neither understand your language nor recognize your customs and race. Yet, if there you enter a Catholic church, you feel at home in it at once. The priest, though he never saw you, is your friend, the holy sacrifice of the Mass your familiar devotion, and every Catholic hand that marks its forehead with the

blessed sign of the cross is extended to you in Christian charity and fraternal welcome. And why? Because, as the Apostle says, we being many are yet one. *For as the body is one and has many members; and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, yet are one body, so also is Christ. For in one spirit were we all baptized into one body.* (I Cor. xii, 12.)

Third Point.—There is still another phase of that grand Catholic union which binds us one to another, gathered into the one fold of Christ, who is our Good Shepherd. It is the *charity* which every true Catholic exercises *towards those who do not belong to this fold* of our holy Mother Church. Christ died for all men. He would that all should be saved. Hence He says in the Gospel of this day: *And other sheep I have that are not of this fold: them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.*

How plainly it marks our duty. Not only are we as Christians to *bear one another's burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ*, but we are to remember that God wishes those who are straying in darkness and error to be led into the one true Church. We can do much, each in his sphere, to make the voice of our Good Shepherd heard by those who are at a distance from Him. Our lives may be a standing reproach to vice, a proof of the saving and sanctifying teaching of our holy religion. Then only may we exhort a brother with true Christian charity, for our own actions must bear witness to the sincerity of our admonitions. And last of all we can and should pray for all those who do not enjoy the light of faith, who do not belong to Christ. *I desire*, writes St. Paul to Timothy, *that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men . . . . . for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.* (I Tim. ii, 1.)

Conclusion.—Thus, my brethren, we are truly united in the bond of charity. Let it be shown in the outward harmony of all the brethren. Let it be felt in the heart by the forbearance and patience which cements true peace. Let it be preserved by true loyalty in all things to our common leader, the Good Shepherd and His Vice-regent on earth. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

(Patronage of St. Joseph.)
Less. Gen. XLIX, 22-26.
Gosp. Luke III, 21-23.
Epist. I Pat. II, 11-19.
Gosp. John XVI, 16-22.

Subject.—*The Protection of St. Joseph.*

Introduction.—There is hardly a Catholic church however poor and small in which you do not find an altar erected in honor of St. Joseph, the foster-father of our Blessed Lord. As we offer our love and adoration to Christ hidden under the veil of the Eucharistic Presence we cannot forget Mary and Joseph in whose company the Holy Child grew up to manhood. If Mary stands alone in her immaculate Motherhood of the divine Infant, St. Joseph's affectionate care of both Mother and Child, his modest manliness, his virginal purity, draw to him the devotion of young and old, of husband and wife, of the spouse and the soldier of Christ.

Transition.—This day the Church has set apart in honor of St. Joseph. He has other feasts. The entire month of March is dedicated to an affectionate remembrance of the foster-father of Christ; but now amid the sweet hymns which resound from Catholic hearts in praise of our lovely Queen of May, we are to recall the fact that St. Joseph was the guardian of Jesus and Mary during their sojourn on earth and that now in heaven he is the special guardian of that other Spouse of the Holy Ghost whom Christ left in His place—the holy Catholic Church; and the guardian also of us who belong to that fair mother.

If we ask what was the particular mission of St. Joseph in his connection with Mary and Jesus we find it to have been threefold: first as protector of the Virgin, then as educator of the Holy Child, and lastly as guardian of the Holy Family in temporal needs. Thus the threefold protectorate which St. Joseph exercises in the Church consists in his being the *Patron of Virgins*, the *Model of parents* and the *Helper in* the manifold *afflictions* which try the great family of our holy Mother, the children of the Church.

First Point.—Catholic tradition throughout all ages has ever set forth the angelic purity of the foster-father of Jesus Christ. St.

Thomas Aquinas enquiring how the most holy Yirgin could give her hand as spouse to St. Joseph, seeing that she had made a vow of virginity, replies that the Blessed Virgin before contracting espousals with St. Joseph, was assured by God that he himself had formed the same resolve of preserving perpetual virginity and that therefore she exposed herself to no peril by her union with him. (Quaest. Sent. 9. xi, a 1.)

No doubt the august Virgin destined to be Mother of Christ had many suitors. Her beauty, her modesty, her royal descent from the illustrious house of David must have made the daughter of the priestly family of Joachim a favorite aspiration of many noble youths of the Hebrew tribe to which she belonged. She avoided them in the chaste seclusion of her simple home. And when an inward light led her to trust her life in the keeping of St. Joseph it reveals to us at once the exalted character of the chosen spouse of Mary.

Many a maiden heart which feels the noble impulse of devoting its first and best affections to God in the state of virginity, in the call to a religious life, meets with obstacles from parents, relatives, friends. To the remonstrances of an affectionate family, to the sneers of a wordly minded circle of friends we can rarely oppose argument which would be of any avail. When our resolution stands in spite of words and taunts, then the evil one, at times, suggests other means. Our friends draw us into society, they dull our affections by vain pleasures, they seek to create in us delights with other things which separate us from God and tie us to the life of the world. Under such circumstances many an innocent soul is diverted from the path of perfection, many a heart meets its wreck and its ruin amid temporary delights.

Now a continuous and practical devotion to St. Joseph is likely to protect the youth or maiden who feels this attraction towards a higher life, a nobler vocation. (Exhort the young, the members of the sodality, children of Mary etc., to make it a point on entering or leaving the church to direct a prayer for the preservation of their purity to St. Joseph.)

Second Point.—St. Joseph is the *model of parents* and especially of the father of the household. Mark the whole tenor of his life from the journey to Bethlehem to the return from Egypt. Tradition paints him as walking the weary road, leading the beast of burden which carries the Immaculate Mother with her Precious Treasure which was to redeem all the world. Follow him in his

disappointing search for a shelter where the new-born King might find a little bed. Who can fathom the depth of sorrow struck in that noble heart by the taunts and the gibes, the brutal refusals to give a few feet of room to a young mother, the fairest, the sweetest and kindest of mothers, whom the world had ever borne. Does it teach us no lesson of a husband's forbearance and self-sacrifice when we glean the scalding tears as they flow from those manly, gentle eyes of the foster-father of Christ as he returns to the cave at night and tells his sad tale to her? There is no room for you and the Child in the inn. O virgin heart of St. Joseph, how was it thou didst not break in uttering the words! And when the angel comes to him at night saying: Go take the Child and Its mother and go to Egypt, he did not delay, he did not murmur at the design of God, but gently wakened them, and carefully guided them through the barren wastes into a strange and inhospitable land.

Learn then, you, fathers and husbands, to treat your wives and children with care, with forbearance, never wearying of the labor, of the trials which God ordains or permits for your good. And when you find it hard to bear the burden of domestic misfortune, or to provide for your families as you would wish, or to educate your children in the fear of God—then cultivate a practical devotion to St. Joseph. His life on earth was not merely to be the example of the perfect husband and father, but it was also to give us in him a helper, an intercessor with God. You have a heavy responsibility; wife and child depend on you. See then that you do not neglect them and thus lose your own souls. Turn to St. Joseph mornings ere you leave your homes, evenings when you return, and here at the week's beginning and end ask from him counsel and courage and help in the manifold needs of your family life.

Third Point.—But St. Joseph is not only the helper of the devout and struggling soul who seeks to lead a life of purity and prayer, or of the husband or father who finds in him a wise protector and guide—the Church, chaste Spouse of the Holy Ghost, has placed him over all her household as the universal friend of her children amid necessities and afflictions.

You remember how Joseph, the son of the Patriarch Jacob in the Old Testament, became the lord of all Egypt. How it was in the first place his love of purity, which, bringing with it affliction and imprisonment through the false accusation of Potiphar's wife, procured him in the end the confidence of the King. Then his

prudence and wisdom saved Egypt and his own nation from years of famine and wretchedness.

Some twenty years ago, when the Holy Father and his people were in dire distress because the freedom of the Church was threatened by the captivity of the Sovereign Pontiff in his own city and land, the venerable Pius IX, seeing no possibility of relief through human aid, turned to St. Joseph for protection. And that all his children throughout the Catholic Church might unite their prayers and obtain the favor of heaven through the powerful intercession of this great Saint, the Sovereign Pontiff wished that all Catholics should look henceforth upon St. Joseph as the special Patron of the holy Church and that they should invoke his name under this title. And so we have done since. Many a cloud has passed away; many a gathering storm has been turned aside and there are gleams of hope that Leo XIII will see our holy Church triumph over the attacks of her enemies and be free once more. But even if the day of deliverance and glorious victory be deferred, we are sure of it because St. Joseph is our Patron and Protector.

Conclusion.—Pray then, my brethren, as our holy Church directs and in the words which she adopts: O great and good St. Joseph, chaste Spouse of the Immaculate Virgin, and guardian of the Word Incarnate, we place ourselves with confidence under thy protection, and beg of thee to teach us to practice the virtues of the Holy Child. We earnestly desire to become pure, and humble, and patient like unto thee. Bless youth and maiden, that they may hold within their hearts intact the lily of holy purity! Bless fathers and mothers, that they may follow thee in patience and forbearance, carrying one another's burdens; that they may train their children up in the fear of the Lord! Bless us, all the faithful of God's flock, sons and daughters of the Spouse of Christ, our holy Church, that we may never waver in fidelity to her amid all her tribulations, and that she may soon see the day of her joyful victory. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Epist. James I, 17-21.
Gosp. John XVI, 5-14.

Subject.—*The Government of the tongue.*

"Let every man be swift to hear but slow to speak." (Epistle.)

Introduction.—Great men are often silent men. Our Lord Himself sketches the picture of the man of God who shall convert the

nations as one whose voice is not heard on the highways. *In silence and in hope* says the prophet Isaias (Isa. xxx, 15) *shall be your strength.* St. James tells us many excellent things about the use and abuse of words, all of which may be summed up in the words of our text "*Let every man be swift to hear and slow to speak.*"

Transition.—Now there are many reasons why we should harken to this admonition of the Saint, and there are several ways in which we may attain to a more careful government of our tongue. Let us briefly dwell on these, for there are few of us who have not reason day by day to be sorry for the folly of their speech, if not for its sinfulness.

First Point.

a. Silence is a help to thoughtfulness. The habit of speaking less fosters the disposition to think more. Power grows in solitude, and reflection ripens most likely into deeds when it is sparing in words. The diamond is formed in the seclusion of the earth; the pearl is oftenest found in the depth of the sea. In the same way, the mind strengthens and crystallises its thoughts, which become more clear and defined the longer they are kept in the soul.

b. It increases your influence with others. They who are guarded in their speech are always listened to with greater attention and confidence. We feel that there is a purpose where words are few.

c. It is a help to peace. We rarely regret having been silent, whilst we often regret having spoken. Many words rob us of our *inward* tranquillity. They cause misunderstanding, disturb the harmony of friends and thus create *outward* disunion.

d. It makes us better. If any man offend not in words the same is a perfect man. (S. James iii, 2.) The measure, therefore, of our progress in virtue is, according to the Apostle, our power to govern the tongue; which is nothing else than the perfect practice of meekness and patience.

Second Point.—How shall we attain to this excellent gift of controling our tongue? Most of us desire it, but few find themselves capable of doing so.

a. *By reflecting seriously* from time to time on the *evils of an unchecked speech.* The habit of speaking much weakens and degrades us. We readily conclude of a person who has an ungovernable tongue that he or she has a shallow and weak mind. *The tongue,* says St. James, *is indeed a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how a small fire kindleth a great wood. And the tongue is a fire, a world of of iniquity. The tongue is placed among our members, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of our our nativity, being set on fire by hell.* (St. James iii, 5.)

An evil tongue destroys many of our good works and those of others. *It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. By it we bless God and the Father, and by it we curse men, who are made after the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing . . . . doth a fountain send forth through the same passage sweet and bitter water? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear grapes, or the vine figs? So neither can salt water yield sweet.* (Ibid.)

b. But we must use another help together with that of seriously thinking about the evil results of hasty and idle words. It would be a prudent and practical measure of correcting ourselves were we to resolve *each day,* morning or evening to *read the third chapter of St. James* on the subject and before retiring at night to *examine* ourselves upon the *conversations and words* we have had that day.

If we wish to become wise we must take some pains. Everybody, especially the young, are eager to learn practical wisdom which will help them to success in life. Well the daily study of what use we have to make of our tongue and the faults which we have to avoid in this regard, is a good schooling for the true wisdom which carries us to certain success both in this life and in eternity. *Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show by a good conversation his work in the meekness of wisdom. . . . . The wisdom which is from above first indeed is chaste, then peaceable, modest, easy to be persuaded, consenting to the good, full of mercy and good fruits, without judging, without dissimulation.* (St. James iii, 15.)

c. Finally we must pray for this gift by which we are enabled to govern our tongue. It is a grace and many cannot reach it by

purely individual efforts. Hence it is said in holy writ that *every kind of beasts and of birds and of serpents and of the rest, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind; but the tongue no man can tame.* God, who granted the gift of tongues to the Apostles that they might announce the blessings of the Gospel to all nations, will also give to us, if we ask for it, the government of the tongue and the grace to use it only for the advantage and sanctification of our neighbor. *Ask and you shall receive*, provided also you make the earnest efforts which are in the power of every one.

Conclusion.—If we feel conscious that we have lost much in the past through the want of ruling our tongue; if strife and contention and bitter zeal have filled our lives with thorns, let us turn to account the opportunities of correcting these evils in the future. Young and old rightly covet the rare power of thoughtfulness, and influence and virtue. Well, be assured that the government of our tongue is one of the most direct means for the attaining of these gifts, gifts which in the true Christian bring blessings upon the world around him and constant peace in his own heart, a peace which no man can rob him of. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Epist. James I, 22-27.
Gosp. John XVI, 23-30.

Subject.—*The Meaning of Rogation-week.*

Introduction.—In the present week occur what are called the *Rogation days*. They are three days yearly set apart for special prayer, just before the Ascension. Their purpose is to invite the faithful throughout the Catholic world to united devotion, partly in thanksgiving, partly in petition. We shall best understand their meaning by tracing their origin, which dates back to the year 474.

It is related that at that time the city of Vienne, in France, was visited with a succession of sad calamities. Repeated earthquakes had reduced the people to a state of constant fright of the evils which might momentarily come upon them by fresh upheavals of

the earth. To add to these terrors a great conflagration broke out on the eve of the Easter festival and threatened to destroy the whole town. Helpless in their fear the people rushed in crowds to the blessed Bishop Mamertus, whom they find lying outstretched before the altar in the Church, imploring the mercy of God upon the city. Confident of the intercessory power of the holy priest, the people remain and join in his outcries for mercy, repeating the petitions of the litany with him. The fire is stayed and the terrors which haunted the district cease. Then the saintly Mamertus orders that solemn processions of thanksgiving be made for three days, and special prayers be offered that peace and quiet might continue for the future. And soon other cities and other lands that were in distress imitated the good example of the holy Bishop, and thus the custom of the three days of prayer at this time, in which processions of thanksgiving were made and the litanies chanted in solemn choir, obtained throughout the whole world—and, after fifteen hundred years, we still celebrate them during the three days between this and Ascension Thursday.

First Point.—The Rogation days impose on us the duty of *thanksgiving*.

a. *For benefits* general and special which we have received. All the good we enjoy comes from God; yet we are accustomed to take His gifts as a matter of course and forget that He may withdraw or withhold them at any time.

b. *For evils averted.* Sin is continually drawing down upon us the wrath of a just judge. Our habitual ingratitude invites the angry punishments of heaven. It is the special mercy of God which keeps from us in one way or another the chastisement which we deserve owing to sin or forgetfulness of our duty towards God.

Second Point.—The Rogation days are moreover a time of special requests from heaven. Every one of us stands in need of some particular graces and helps. We are in want of employment. We labor under some grievous tempation. We are afflicted with some disease which we strive in vain to cure. We feel the weight of some impending trial, some misunderstanding, some doubtful issue of our temporal affairs which for the time absorb all our anxiety. All this should become the subject of our prayer during the

Rogation days. We may, as it were, gather all our necessities together and lay them at the feet of our Lord who is about to ascend into heaven and can relieve us of the burden.

Our confidence, too, is strengthened in the recollection that at this time the entire Church unites for the same purpose, and that it is a season when the gates of God's mercy are far apart by reason of the universal supplication.

Conclusion.—Let us then commemorate these days by pouring out our gratitude to God for all His goodness to us and likewise implore His special assistance in our present necessities and in the distress that waits on our brethren elsewhere. Every day we hear sad tales of famine and destruction and disease and ruin. Each of us, however poor, can contribute his mite to relieve such distress by prayer, that God may carry consolation and temporal assistance to those of our fellow-men who are afflicted in one way or another. Thus will we assure for ourselves the mercy of God in time of possible affliction and the acts of gratitude and petition will keep alive in our hearts the sense of our dependence on our heavenly Father. Amen.

ASCENSION THURSDAY (OR SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE).

Less. Acts I, 1-11.
Gosp. Mark XVI, 14-20.

Subject.—*The Pulpit and the Pew.*

Introduction.—The feast of the Ascension marks the last day which Christ spent with His disciples in that familiar, albeit solemn converse which He retained for forty days after His wonderful resurrection from the tomb, in order to confirm them in the divine assurance which He had given of His mission. Henceforth they were to represent Him, but the Holy Spirit would guard them in place of the friendly direction which He had given them as the Master among His disciples. He speaks to them of their mission, of the wondrous effects which shall attend their preaching if living faith accompany the same ; and then suddenly *while they looked on, He was raised up.* Fixed to the spot they stood there gazing on high, until angels aroused them from their waking dream and said :

Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven. (Epistle.)

Transition.—Like the men of Galilee, you, my Brethren, are looking up to the Apostles, the priests who stand in the place of Christ and to whom He gave His last message of preaching the kingdom of heaven to every creature. If the angels on the mount on Ascension day were to ask you: Ye children of the Catholic Church, ye disciples of Christ, why stand you looking up to heaven? you would make answer that it is to hear the words of the Gospel, contained in the last familiar teaching of the divine Master to His children. *He chides them for their correction's sake* and He *teaches them the virtue of faith* and all its benificent effects. In this lies the *mission of the preacher in the pulpit* even to this day. In this lies the *duty of the christian hearer in the pew*, who looks up to the representative of Christ.

First Point.—*The mission of the pulpit* is then, in the first place, *to correct.* The Gospel of to-day opens, as you have heard, with the words: *Jesus appeared to the eleven as they were at table, and He upraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart.* It was a well meant censure coming from a Master who had proved His love for them in wondrous ways, even unto death. But it was also an example and an injunction. The Apostle of Christ, St. Paul, the great preacher chastises without mercy the faults of Jews and pagans and also of the newly converted Christians when their lukewarmness and infidelity give him occasion as in the case of the Corinthians (1 Cor. iv and v Writing to his beloved disciple Timothy whom he sends to this same people to teach them, he says: *I charge thee before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead, by His coming, and His Kingdom: Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season, reprove, entreat, rebuke with all patience* and *doctrine* (ii Tim. iv). Elsewhere he writes of public sinners: *Them that sin reprove before all; that the rest may also have fear* (i Tim. v, 20). Such is the office of every preacher of Christ.

But that which places a great difficulty in the way of the preacher as a chastiser and corrector of evildoers and stubborn sinners is the fact that men are unwilling to hear the truth when it points out their own defects. We are living in days such as the Apostle speaks

of when he says: *There shall be a time, when they will not hear sound doctrine; but according to their own desires they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they will turn away indeed their heart from the truth and will be turned to fables.* It is to avoid this evil and others like it that we in the Catholic Church do not choose our preachers, but they are appointed to us. The Catholic priest, as a rule, is not afraid to chide and correct from the pulpit or the altar, and our people are fully conscious that they do not pay him to speak to them soft words which please or amuse, but do not make them better men.

Second Point.—A second duty of the pulpit, not less important than the first, is the expounding of the truth. The Christian preacher not only acts as a monitor, as a judge in morals over his people; but he is also their teacher. Through him they receive the understanding of faith. St. Paul, speaking to the Romans, says of the unconverted pagans: *How shall they believe Him,* that is to say God, *of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear Him without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they be sent, as it is written: How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace?* (Rom. x, 15.) *Go ye,* said our Lord, *into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned.* It was only a last repetition of the solemn words of Christ which St. Matthew relates: *And Jesus, coming, spoke to them: All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.* (St. Matt. xxviii, 18.)

Third Point.—We have seen that it is the heaven-appointed duty of the Christian preacher to chastise wrongdoers and to teach truth. If so, then it must be the duty of the disciple, the true Christian, to accept with humble heart the just correction, and to listen with docile disposition of mind to the exposition of truth. *He that heareth you, heareth Me,* says our Lord, *and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me. And he that despiseth Me, despiseth Him that sent Me.* (St. Luke x, 16.) Now this obligation of hearing both the admonition to a right mode of life and the teachings of truth requires of us—

a. *Fidelity in attending* to the instructions given in the church. Many find a sermon too wearisome. They dispose of their Sunday and holy-day devotion in the shortest possible manner by going to a low mass. Hence the sermon is often preached to empty pews. Our lukewarm Christians do not care to hear their faults brought home to them, and they are satisfied with the truths that are preached to them through their newspapers and books at home. They are like those cities against which our Lord threatens His ultimate vengeance when He says to His disciples : *Into whatsoever city you enter, and they receive you not, going forth into the streets thereof, say : Even the very dust of your city that cleaveth to us we wipe off against you. You know this, that the kingdom of God is at hand. I say to you, it shall be more tolerable at that day for Sodom, than for that city.* (St. Luke x, 10.)

b. Next it is our duty to listen with docility and reverence. It is the fashion to-day to criticise the preacher or his sermon. We have come to adopt in some measure the method of non-Catholics who value their preachers according to the measure of eloquence which they possess. Now the Catholic Church selects her ministers on very different grounds. They are often simple and rude in speech, as St. Paul says of himself: *And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not in loftiness of speech, or of wisdom ; declaring the testimony of Christ . . . . and my speech, and my preaching, was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the showing of the spirit and power : that your faith might not stand on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.* (1 Cor. ii, 1-4.)

c. Lastly we should listen with *dispositions of lively faith ;* that is to say, we should strive to carryinto our lives the doctrine here taught. It is only thus that the hearing of God's word can be of real profit to us. Our Lord, with solemn words, assured His disciples : *These signs shall follow them that believe. In My name they shall cast out devils ; they shall speak with new tongues ; they shall take up serpents ; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them ; they shall lay their hands upon the sick and they shall recover.* (Gospel.) Now if these miracles are of less frequent occur-

rence in our own times than they were in past ages, it is simply because faith has grown cold among the children of men. They hear, but there is not that deep conviction which makes faith a reality, and which awakens in the soul that valiant trust which we read of in the lives of the saints and which we still witness occasionally in those whose strong faith bends down the mercy of God.

Conclusion.—Let then, my brethren, the pew second the efforts of the pulpit. Come more frequently to the instructions given for your benefit; not expecting to hear beautiful words and pleasing eulogies of your virtue, but rather be prepared to receive correction and a better knowledge of our holy faith. Words are but like sounding brass or tinkling cymbals unless they convey truth, truth which points out the errors of our lives; and truth which shows us the way to Heaven. Amen.

HOMILETIC MONTHLY

JUNE.

5. Pentecost.
12. Trinity Sunday.
16. Corpus Christi (or Sunday within the Octave).
25. Feast of the Sacred Heart.
26. Third Sunday after Pentecost.

PENTECOST.

Less. Acts II, 1-11.
Gosp. John XIV, 23-31.

Subject.—*The effects of the Holy Ghost dwelling in us.*

Introduction.—To-day we commemorate the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles. It was the beginning of the Catholic Church as an authoritative teaching body. Our Lord in leaving His disciples shortly before had promised them the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit who should guide and teach them further and preserve the infant Church for all time to come from error in her mission of propagating the Kingdom of Christ throughout the entire world.

The lesson read from the Acts of the Apostles relates the fulfillment of this promise and describes the strange and wonderful effects which the descent of the Holy Ghost produced upon the disciples. These effects are principally two, namely a great *zeal and fortitude* in the profession of their faith before the assembled crowds of strangers, many of whom were hostile to the new doctrine of the Crucified; and secondly, a *marvelous gift of language*, which made the Apostles understood by all who heard them.

The gifts of the Holy Ghost bestowed upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, have in a manner become the inheritance of every Christian who has received the Sacrament of Confirmation. If it

fails us at any time or habitually, the reason lies perhaps in the fact that we do not rightly use these gifts, dormant in every soul, which is a vessel of divine election in the Church of Christ.

First Point.—The first effect which the descent of the Holy Ghost produced upon the Apostles was that they became filled with an unaccountable *fortitude and zeal* in defence of their faith. Since the death of their beloved Master they had been obliged to evade the fanatical fury of the pharisees, whose angry hostility had only increased when they heard of the resurrection of our Lord from the tomb. The disciples therefore were obliged to do their work of evangelizing in silence and frequently to hide themselves. A great feast of the Jews was at hand, the same as our Pentecost, and multitudes of strangers would come to Jerusalem to visit the Temple on that day. So the disciples retired to a quiet place where they might pray and avoid the crowd lest they be accused of fomenting sedition among the people. *And when the days of Pentecost were accomplished they were all together in one place; and suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting* (lesson of the day). At this sound all their timidity, all fear of persecution and death vanished and they went forth and preached to the assembled crowds. And their words took hold upon all the people and made a wonderful impression. Many Jews and Pagans were converted and baptized and carried the faith which they had received into their homes and countries.

Second Point.—But if the fortitude and zeal of the Apostles was mighty as the wind from heaven and the fire that swayed above their heads, it was also gentle. The Holy Spirit is ordinarily represented as a dove. It was in this form that He appeared at the baptism of our Lord in the Jordan. Well, my brethren, the zeal which the spirit of God inspires has both characteristics; it is brave and fearless, but it is also *meek and gentle* as the spirit of the dove.

There is a bitter zeal, an angry, injudicious zeal, which we all know of in men who, otherwise good, cannot bridle their temper. That zeal is not of God. It is ever ready to blame; it sees only faults where there is weakness. It begets envy and strife and malignity. It rests upon rash judgments and partial views and spends its force not upon rooting out evils, but upon rousing suspicions and scandals. Now the spirit of God manifests its zeal in a very differ-

ent way. Here is what the Apostle, St. Paul, who was filled with that same zeal of God and did not spare the real evil-doer when occasion called for chastisement—this is what he says of the effect of the Holy Ghost in the Christian soul. *The fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency and chastity.* (Gal. v, 22.) And these virtues are mighty indeed in effecting good, when they are allied with Christian fortitude.

Third Point.—"But" you will say, "I am bold enough to assert my faith before men and I wish to do so in all gentleness and charity; still when I come to explain the principles of my religion to others I often fail to find the right words and whilst I firmly believe the Catholic doctrine in my heart I cannot make the same truth intelligible to others."

Let me give you an answer to this difficulty. Perhaps you do not pray for the aid and light of the Holy Ghost. If you do, the words will come to you as you need them. The Apostles were assembled at prayer; no doubt they were anxiously awaiting the Paraclete whom their Master had promised to them. Suddenly, whilst a curious multitude was gathering around their place of refuge they came forth, not only with apostolic courage and Christlike charity, but endowed with the wonderful gift of speech which made them *understood by every one who heard them.*

There is a language, my brethren, which we can all speak, if we have the spirit of God, and which can be understood by every one, Pagan and Jew and Christian. That language is the language of our daily lives and actions, the language of charity, the language of a burning love and zeal for the glory of God. Many an ignorant person has converted those more learned; many a simple and pure-hearted servant has unconsciously led the mind of master and mistress to the truth; aye often the innocent child has found a way to bring its infidel father or mother back into the paths of holy Church. We need not many or learned words. Our actions will speak and either draw or repel men who are open to the truth.

Conclusion.—Here then, my brethren, lies a grave lesson. We all have, God grant, received worthily the holy Sacrament of Confirmation. This is a day which should recall to us a sense of the gratitude we owe for the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which we then received. Do we bear the fruits of it in our lives? Are we brave in

professing our faith and imparting its ways to others? Do we speak of and enforce that faith by the fiery tongues of charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness? Or is our zeal full of bitterness and rancor, profitable neither to ourselves nor our neighbor? Let it not be so, my brethren, but pray that the gifts of the Holy Ghost may be renewed in us this day and bear fruit in our hearts unto life everlasting. Amen.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

Epist. Rom. XI, 33-36.
Gosp. Matt. XXVIII, 18-20.

Subject.—*The Hidden Mark on our Brow.*

Introduction.—When shortly after our birth we were brought to the House of God to be baptized, the priest, before pouring the regenerating water upon us, made on our forehead the sign of the cross. And he repeated the same sign on our breast near the heart, saying: "Receive the *mark of the cross on thy brow* and on thy heart and take upon thee the observance of the heavenly precept; live in such a manner that henceforth thou mayest be the temple of God." Again that mark was traced upon our head with holy oil and since that day has remained there with an indelible character, not visible to man, but to God and His angels and to the demons of hell.

That sign of the cross goes with us everywhere, and it becomes a charm to those who are concious of its power and who renew it frequently by tracing it on forehead, lips or heart and saying: "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

This holy feast of the Triune Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, gives us an opportunity of recalling the wonderful *virtue that is contained in the sign of the Cross* to the Christian who realizes its meaning and uses it aright.

First Point.—The mark of the cross on our brow is the indelible character which God has impressed on us in baptism. It distinguishes the children of Christ from those who have not received the call to holy faith. As such, seen by God and the blessed of heaven,

it becomes to us *a source of special protection against danger.* When God punished the crimes of Pharaoh who held the Jews captive in the land of the Egyptians, He bade Moses to mark the door-post of every house in which an Israelite dwelt, with the blood of the Paschal Lamb ; and the avenging angel passed by the homes that were thus marked whilst he struck dead the firstborn of every Egyptian family.

In a similar way we mark our forehead with holy water. It keeps sickness and temptation from our homes and bodies. If ever it fails to prevent such evils, it is because we do not use it thoughtfully and reverently. Listen to the beautiful words which holy Church pronounces in blessing this water on Sundays. "O Lord, hearken to our invocation, and infuse into this water the virtue of Thy blessing, so that being used in the service of Thy mysteries, it may receive the power through divine grace, of dispelling the demons and of banishing sickness ; grant that wherever this water is sprinkled, in the homes and habitations of the faithful, every trace of uncleanness, every noxious influence may be removed ; that no pestilence or corrupting disease, no snares of the insidious fiend of our salvation may remain amongst us ; and if there be anything which might injure those who dwell in this place, let it be banished by the sprinkling of this water ; let health be ours through the invocation of Thy holy name and shield our homes from all harm. Through Christ our Lord."

Such are the invocations with which the element of water is blessed. As often as we take it making the sign of the cross upon our forehead, or our heart, or our lips, or our food, or anything that we may use, so often do we repeat the prayer which the Church has pronounced upon it in her blessing.

Second Point.—But not alone is evil banished from our persons and homes by this wonderful sign of the cross ; that royal sign is likewise a mark of triumph and success. If it banishes sickness and temptation, it also brings joy and peace and victory. There lived more than fifteen hundred years ago a great general, Constantine by name, who was much beloved by those who knew him. At the time there was much strife among two rival rulers at Rome, who wreaked their unjust vengeance upon the poor Christians by making them the object of persecution. It so happened that Constantine was proclaimed Emperor by the soldiers who loved him for his justice and other noble qualities. But when the new Emperor wished to take

possession of Rome the powerful faction of the old rulers opposed his entrance. The Christians had hoped that he might conquer because he was known to be virtuous and honorable and although himself a pagan they were certain he would not persecute them as other Emperors before him had done. Well, on the eve of the great battle, before the gates of pagan Rome, where Constantine was commanding his army, many of whom were secretly Christians, there happened a wonderful spectacle. The Emperor and soldiers saw in the heavens a large bright cross, and around this luminous emblem of the Christian faith, they read these words : *In this sign shalt thou conquer.* Full of confidence in the God of the Christians, Constantine fought with his valiant troops and they won the day and entered the city. Rome was free from the pagan yoke and Constantine became a Christian. For the first time the cross was openly raised on the houses where the Christians used to meet for prayer and the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Constantine had it emblazoned on the standard of his army. But from that day he refused to live as Emperor in Rome. He called it the Holy City and gave it to the Popes that they should dwell there ; and he himself chose another city for his imperial throne, known as Constantinople. That is the origin of the Temporal power of the Popes my brethren. As the Eternal City had been won by the aid of the cross of Christ, so Constantine the Great, the first Christian Emperor would ever have it belong to Christ's vicar on earth.

And need I tell you that this victory of the cross is in some way repeated every day? If we were to begin all our undertakings with this holy sign, there would be fewer failures in our lives. And if we do make the sign of the cross and still fail, it is simply because we make it in a thoughtless and perfunctory manner, without reflecting on the meaning of the blessing which it should call down on us? Some of us make it in haste in presence of others as if we were half ashamed of it. Ah, my brethren that blessed sign will one day appear in the heavens as a token of victory before all the world. In its presence shall we be judged !

Conclusion.—Resolve then on this feast in honor of the Most Holy Trinity

a. To express with heart and lip your joyous gratitude in belonging to the glorious army of Christian soldiers who follow the royal ensign, the standard of the cross, sure token of victory and triumph.

b. To reverence this cross, as the emblem of your Christian nationality, as the promise of your salvation.

c. To make it *thoughtfully*, pronouncing the august name of the Most Holy Trinity with the heart as well as with the lips.

d. To make it *becomingly*, so that others may understand that we have some meaning in the action by which we place our hand upon forehead and breast.

e. To make it *often;* for the sign of the cross is a prayer. (Examples of the Saints . . . Indulgences attached to it.) Amen.

CORPUS CHRISTI.

Epist. I, Cor. XI, 23-29.
Gosp. John VI, 56-59.

Subject. – *Reverence before the Blessed Sacrament.*

Introduction.—The Most Blessed Sacrament was instituted on Holy Thursday, the eve of the Passion and the death of our Blessed Lord. On that day Catholics everywhere devoutly visit the Repositories in our churches. But as that is a time of sorrow, whilst the Blessed Sacrament is not only a pledge of the death of our Saviour but also a source of joy and gratitude, the Church has selected a day in the month of June, when all nature is in rich bloom, so as to render a gladsome honor and thanks to the Most Blessed Sacrament. Such is the feast of Corpus Christi, a time when the precious Body of our divine Lord, hidden under the eucharistic veil is carried in procession, imparting His blessing upon the land and people who worship Him in joyful adoration.

This is therefore a feast which must deeply interest us. Emanuel, "God with us," our greatest treasure on earth, our Lord and King holds, so to say, public reception on this day; and we are called upon to do Him honor and become the recipients of His graceful favors.

First Point.—The honor which we pay to the Most Blessed Sacrament is honor paid to God directly. As such it implies at once the performance of *a duty* and the enjoyment of *a privilege.*

If an earthly representative of authority command our obedience and respect, not only inwardly, but outwardly as well, we cannot deny it to Him who is the source of all authority, our supreme Lord and Master. Our faith which convinces us of the real and actual presence of the sacred Body and Blood of Christ in the eucharistic species rests not on the imagination but on the unmistakable avowal of God Himself in the Sacred Scriptures. Our eyes, our taste, our feelings may be deceived, but God Himself cannot deceive and mislead His own children, of whom He knew, that they would implicitly believe His words. Age after age, since the day of the first solemn Passover in the Coenacle at Jerusalem, the loftiest minds have bowed their intellect in humble acknowledgment of this wonderful mystery. The noblest hearts have poured out their love upon it and found a response which brought them nearer to the Godhead. And so every Catholic bends his head and addresses his prayer to this hidden Lord, confident that He cannot deceive those who trust in Him and His word.

Our homage then, on this occasion, is a distinct and emphatic expression of our faith. It is likewise an acknowledgment that we feel our dependence on God : that we owe to Him all we have ; that we are accountable to Him in the last instance for all we do and think.

But if the Majesty which hides itself in the humble guise of the Blessed Sacrament is nevertheless our Lord and Master in all things, He is likewise our gracious Benefactor and Friend. Thus to the duty of allegiance we join the happy privilege of grateful love. He does not only own all things, but He can do everything for us. *Rejoice O thou habitation of Zion* calls out the prophet in expectant joy of the hidden Messiah, *for great is He that dwells in the midst of thee, the Holy One of Israel, the Saviour.* He is our Saviour, not only once on Calvary, but ever since, in all our miseries and calamities ; a Saviour from sin, from suffering, from temptation and fear of evil to come.

Second Point.—If this be so, if He who dwells in our very midst in the Most Blessed Sacrament is the great God, the universal Benefactor to whom we not only owe homage but who is our best of friends—then the question confronts us of *how we are to honor Him?* The answer is not difficult if we remember how we honor those who are great and good on earth.

a. In the first place we show our respect by *our manner in His presence.* God is everywhere and in a measure our adoration

is constant, whether we eat or drink or sleep or work, we are ever to remember that the divine eye is upon us. But there are special times and places in which our adoration assumes a more definite form.

Thus when we appear in presence of the Blessed Sacrament we should express our reverence in our dress, in our outward manner as well as our inward recollection? How do we treat the great ones of earth when we visit them or when we mean to ask a favor from them? Do we not spend time and care so as to make a good impression? See then that you be in clean and orderly attire when you come to the Church, that you bend the knee in real reverence, that you avoid everything which could seem unbecoming in one who presents himself to a great Lord and to the Judge with whom rests our future, all our interests, temporal and eternal.

b. Further we show our regard for our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament by *visiting Him* as often as we can. He is our dearest friend. It is not with Him as with the great ones of the world who easily misunderstand us or our motives and who will not listen to every request. Our Lord sees the heart. He cannot misunderstand us if we are sincere. He wants us to speak to Him without fear or reserve; for this very reason He has assumed so humble a form as that of the eucharistic species. How many times do we pass by an open church without entering for a little while and saluting our Lord! Yet we would act differently with a dear friend who invites us to come, and we would be offended at him did he pass us by.

c. Finally we honor our Lord by *receiving Him* in holy communion. Men in society have their receptions for their friends. Our Lord always keeps open house. He is ready to receive His children and friends, poor sinners though they be, at all times. He awaits them, welcomes them day and night in the little tabernacle of innumerable churches. Should not we who consider ourselves His friends and children return the invitation and receive Him in the home of our hearts and there treat Him with all honor and affection? This is what He wants and asks for.

Conclusion.—We shall consult our best interests if we make some practical resolution this day to do something in honor of the

Most Blessed Sacrament, not only by carefully watching over our outward deportment, but by some acts of reverence which we may have hitherto neglected. Never pass a church in which you know the Blessed Sacrament is kept, without at least saluting your Lord within by lifting the hat; or if possible by entering to say short prayer. Encourage a similar practice in others.

(Suggest a manner of respectful treatment of the Blessed Sacrament when brought into the houses of the sick, etc., etc.) Amen.

FEAST OF THE SACRED HEART.

Less. Isa. XII, 1-6.
Gosp. John XIX, 10-35.

Subject.—*Reparation.*

Introduction.—(Briefly explain the *meaning* of the Devotion to the Sacred Heart.) The main purpose of the devotion is to procure greater glory, love and reparation to the divine Majesty. Why reparation? Because we owe it under various titles.

First Point.—We are bound to reparation under the *title of justice* to the Sacred Heart, which represents the divine Love and Mercy, because of *our* sins,

a. of commission;
b. of omission.

Second Point.—Because of the sins of our brethren, for we cannot, if we love God as we are bound to do, remain indifferent to the injury which His outraged love continually receives from men

a. through ignorance, by those who know Him not;
b. through forgetfulness, by those who know Him;
c. through malice, by those who do not want to know Him.

Hence, even if we ourselves preserved our hearts carefully from the stain of sin, we would nevertheless be obliged under the *title of love*, friendship and compassionate sympathy to make reparation to the divine Heart.

Third Point.—The *means of making this reparation* are at our command and suggested by the devotion to the Sacred Heart.

a. In the daily *union of our intentions* and prayers with the loving intentions of the divine mercy in regard to sinners. God Himself is hindered from bestowing His graces on men by the indifference and hardness of heart which they oppose to these gifts. As good example sometimes moves a person to a virtuous act, so our sincere prayer lends a special help to the sinner by which he is turned to accept the divine mercy. As this prayer is offered in the name and with the beautiful plea of the Heart which suffered among men and from them, a particular virtue is added to it. God wants us as instruments to carry saving waters to the famished and burning lips of the sick sinner and our service to that end depends on our free will.

b. We facilitate this work of reparation by particular *acts of devotion*, by repeated, though slight *mortifications*, which will not interfere either with our duties or our health nor cause inconvenience to others ; by patience in bearing what is irksome and disagreeable ; by aiding and encouraging others in similar acts of piety and sacrifice.

Conclusion.—(Elicit active interest in the devotion by explaining the work of, and establishing, the "League of the Sacred Heart" or if it exist already, by awaking fresh interest in it. Call to mind some of the promises made to the Blessed Margaret Mary by our Lord as incentives to zeal in the work of saving souls and increasing God's glory in which the laity find abundant room for an effective apostolate.) Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Epist. 1 Pet. V, 6-11.
Gosp. Luke XV, 1-10.

Subject.—*The test and trials of our faith.*

Introduction.—It is a singular fact that no religious denomination of any kind is so generally misrepresented, misunderstood, hated, proscribed and persecuted, as the Catholic Church. She is the oldest. Her teaching is the same as it was from the first. Men

have had every opportunity to study her doctrines, to witness her life in that wonderful development of religious institutions by which she benefits every class of human kind. Nevertheless, the same old calumnies, the same prejudices, the same unreasonable hatred follow her everywhere.

We who know that she teaches only that which, if we practice, would make us more virtuous, more noble and self-sacrificing, might wonder how it can be that the world will so persistently set its face against us, if we had not been foretold by our Divine Lord. *The world will hate you for My name's sake. They will put you out of the synagogues; yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he does a service to God.*

As it is important that we should not lose sight of this fact in the effort to be at peace with all men, let us *study the cause* of it and thence *learn the duty which it imposes* on every individual Catholic.

First Point.—*The world* is in the power of darkness and hence naturally *hostile to the Church of Christ*, who came to convince the world of sin and to wage war against the prince of darkness. Our Lord, indeed, overcame the world, and He left to every man the secret power by which each for himself might gain the victory over it until the end of time. This secret power lies in the sacramental virtue of the Church on earth. She is an army, a militant band in which every man may conquer if he wants to do so. His enemies are the world, his own flesh and the devil. By the world we understand those who, in the words of our Lord *have not known the Father nor Me.* Some know the Father, as did the Jews, but they refuse to accept Christ. Others know Christ, but they refuse to know the Father, that is the entire Catholic truth revealed by Almighty God, not only in the Sacred Scriptures, but in the living voice of the Church assisted by the Holy Ghost.

This is the world which loves its own, which consumes itself in vanities and the search after riches and comfortable living, forgetting the things that are above in the solicitude of earthly cares and pleasures.

This is the world against which St. John protests when he, citing our Lord's words, says: *If the world hate you, know ye that it hated Me before you. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.* (St. John xv, 18.)

This is the world the friendship of which St. James indignantly rejects when he exclaims: *Adulterers, know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of this world becomes an enemy of God.* (St. James iv, 4.)

Second Point.—If the Catholic Church must needs wage an incessant war against worldliness, her very existence is a reproof and reproach to those who, wishing to unite worldliness with religiousness, lessen the requirements of God's law and interpret it to their own destruction. Hence you find that the very men who pretend to be religious themselves will be the first to show their hatred towards Catholics, especially when these are good and virtuous. If they hated or despised the bad among us who merely call themselves Catholics, but do not act up to the sanctifying precepts of their Church, we should but think it natural and proper, for Almighty God Himself detests such lukewarm and bad Catholics who scandalize the faithful and are an injury to the Church and a reproach to their fellows. But this is not the case. People teach the most abominable falsehoods against the Church, its priesthood and its faithful members; and they do this often under the plea of religious instruction in sectarian churches. Books are daily printed in which such lies about the Church are taught and repeated with malice, even for little children who are disposed to love and trust their Catholic neighbors, because they are as yet innocent. (Instance the calumnies retailed in the daily papers, popular novels, etc.)

Third Point.—Now in the face of all this, my brethren, what is our plain duty as Catholics?

a. First, that we be prepared to be misunderstood and slighted for our religion's sake on many occasions, just as our Lord was. *The servant is not greater than his lord; if they have persecuted Me they will also persecute you. . . . . But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me.* (St. John xiii, 20.) The Apostles gloried and rejoiced because they were denounced and innocently maltreated on account of Christ's name.

But mark; it must not be because we give offence that men hate us, or because we are guilty of open faults which

are a source of scandal to them ; no, it must be because we are Roman Catholics. And there are many who hate us just for that fact alone.

b. In the second place we should shun that false temper of conciliation with our non-Catholic brethren which makes us deny or minimize any part of our holy faith. We are not accountable to men for what we believe ; but to God. If He has commanded it and we believe on the strength of His divine word, then we have nothing to fear; even from the persecutors. There is a movement to make our holy Church more "liberal," to make it more congenial to the temperament of our infidel brethren or those of different beliefs. It sounds like the words of a good spirit, my brethren, but in reality it is evil. *Fear not them that can kill the body but cannot harm the soul ; only fear Him who can cast both body and soul into eternal hell-fire.*

Keep peace, indeed, with all men ; but do not seek the approbation of the world at the expense of your faith and loyalty to God and His holy Church. *Woe to you when men shall bless you ; for according to these things did their fathers to the false prophets.* (St. Luke vi, 26.) Nevertheless *do good to them that hate you.*

Conclusion.—Hold on then, my brethren, to the true faith of Christ, the Catholic Church. Be not ashamed of it. Seek not to lessen its teachings, for woe to those who change one iota of that sacred doctrine. Confess your faith before men with all prudence and charity, so that your heavenly Father may also confess you before the world on the last day. Follow not the novelties of speech and the spirit that promises you the friendship of men in matters of religion, as if Christ's words could ever become untrue. But let your lives be such that no one outside of our holy Church may have any just reason to speak ill of you. The slanderer will have to eat his own words ; and they who are of good will, yet not knowing Christ, will be led to seek the truth through the example of the faithful Catholic.—Amen.

NOTES FOR THE PREACHER AND CATECHIST.

TIME TO PREPARE.

We have not time to prepare our instructions! We must at the peril of our soul's salvation give time to prayer and to the study of our sacred profession; and though the Church may desire more preparation where more can be given, and though each one will have to account in proportion to his time and talents and opportunities, yet I say, that the amount of prayer and study to which we are bound, and the amount of education which the priest must have received in preparation, is enough to do what is strictly required, namely, to instruct our people in the rudiments of religion according to their and our capacity, and to do so *cum brevitate et simplicitate sermonis.* Oh, it is no great or difficult thing that is demanded from us. We are not required, nay we are positively forbidden, to speak *in sublimitate sermonis aut in persuasibilibus humanae sapientiae verbis.* (1 *Cor.* 2, 1, 4.) *Prope est verbum in ore tuo et in corde tuo. Hoc est verbum fidei, quod praedicamus.* (*Rom.* 10, 8.) But if our excuses are well grounded, we are bound to discharge the obligation *per alium*, and if we fail to provide a substitute, the Bishop is bound to do so at our expense. If these excuses are fictitious, restitution will be demanded from us at the judgment of God, because *non est aequum nos derelinquere verbum Dei.*

(DR. MORIARTY, *Allocutions.*)

SPONTANEOUS PREACHING.

The power of spontaneous preaching is often overrated. We are all liable to a delusion in our judgment of this, and none more so than the preacher himself, who has every possible inducement, every temptation, I may say, to see evidences which do not exist of effects from such preaching.

Some subtle infirmities of human nature are gratified by the conviction that such preaching does accomplish the work of the pulpit. Under the influence of vanity, we are apt to dignify by the name of Christian simplicity that which is commonplace in thought, shallow in feeling, and ephemeral in effect.

In the pulpit, as everywhere else, the presumption is always against the efficiency of anything which cost the producer little.

Preaching which is really the fruit of a mind at ease, does not end in powerful results. Profound impressions do not come from such sermons. Permanent impressions do not. Impressions formative of character do not. Impressions upon the strongest characters are from no such preaching. I speak now of the law of the pulpit respecting this thing, not of anomalous exceptions.

(PHELPS, *Theory of Preaching.*)

PRAEDICA VERBUM.

Do you wish to transmit to the future generations of your people that faith, which, through poverty and privation, and despite of bloody persecution, your predecessors in the ministry transmitted unto you? If so, preach the word, *Praedica verbum.*

Do you wish to preserve whole and intact, despite the bribes and the blasphemies of the gainsayer, despite the indifference of the worldly-minded, that sacred and saving dogma which Christ flung upon the face of a Pagan world, and to give to your people that knowledge which is life eternal? *Haec est vita aeterna, ut cognoscant te, solum Deum verum, et quem misisti, Jesum Christum.* (John 17, 3.)

Do you wish that this knowledge of God should be poured abroad abundantly, so that in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah it may fill the earth like the coming waters of the sea? If so, *Praedica verbum.*

Do you desire to see your people, clinging to our holy mother, the Church, with a love stronger than death, ready to suffer poverty, and even lose their lives in the torments of hunger, rather than leave the bosom of that mother who brought them forth to Christ? Do you wish them obedient to her laws, observant of her discipline, respectful to her ministers? *Praedica verbum.* Do you desire to see vice uprooted and virtue flourishing? Do you desire that honesty and sobriety and industry and order should be the prevailing habits of your people? *Praedica verbum.*

Do you wish that the fire, which Christ came to scatter on the earth, should be kindled—that man should love God, should love his brother—that the whole Christian community should be knit together in one body in Christ by that charity which is the bond of perfection? Then once more, *Praedica verbum.* Preach the word. *Pascite qui in vobis est gregem Dei.* (I *Pet.* 5, 2.)

(DR. MORIARTY, *Allocutions.*)